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TOWARDS A TRIADIC VIEW OF THE SMARTPHONE-USER-IDENTITY RELATION: OBJECT, SPACE, AND REFLECTION OF THE SELF

Master Thesis

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I have written the Master Thesis myself, independently. All of the other authors' texts, main viewpoints and all data from other resources have been referred to.

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Illusions commend themselves to us because they save us pain and allow us to enjoy pleasure instead. We must therefore accept it without complaint when they sometimes collide with a bit of reality against which they are dashed to pieces.

Sigmund Freud

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INTRODUCTION

"Reality exists in the human mind, and nowhere else."

— George Orwell, *1984*

The year I was born, back in 1989, the World Wide Web was created. I come from a generation that was introduced to the internet and to the use of computers as helpful academic tools in elementary school, while previous generations did not live that kind of experience. I was introduced to mobile phones on my childhood but it wasn't until my teenage years that I was able and allowed to own one. I grew up witnessing the evolution of the device until it became what we now know as a smartphone. When I was younger I could've never imagine that one day I will be carrying the World Wide Web in my pocket, or that my camera, music, lantern, alarm, books, maps and many other needs will be carried and available on a palm-fitting device. I have watched and experience the frenzy of new smartphone releases and observed how people around me have become, if not addicted, greatly dependent on the object. I have friends that could not go a day by without taking a selfie or posting something online, others that focus on the device rather than to the face-to-face interaction that comes from zipping on a coffee in the company of friends. Some acquaintances are more worried about getting liked or to spread some piece of trivial information than to interact with those around them. I've been on this side as well and I've experience the dependency on the smartphone: to know that even though I'm thousands of kilometers away from home if I touch the screen of the rectangular apparatus I can call my loved ones and even see them, I have continuously check my smartphone after sending or posting something, or even catch myself staring at it without any specific purpose, just scrolling through the apps. This has made me realize that the smartphone goes beyond being a machine for communication, it is a whole space in which the experiences, desires and actions of the user are reflected. It is a space in which daily interactions take place and which help us achieve different goals and become more self-reflecting. The smartphone is a special kind of object that works by collecting information and building a personalized and safe sphere for the user. Within this sphere, the reflection of the outside world is created by the pouring in of our information. As the user sees a reflection of the self in the device, perceptions, self-presentation and awareness to the social reaction of our actions becomes instant and constant.

Every year there is a continual growth in the number of smartphone users. By 2016 we have surpassed 2 billion users worldwide. By 2019 it is foreseen that we will surpass the 2 billion 700 thousand users[1]. This means a third of the world population already owns a smartphone. Therefore, the study of the smartphone as an object, a space and as a mirror that reflects the self and society must be studied. A whole new generation is growing up with this device at hand, a device that has become the "contemporary mirror", as kids are now seeing their reflection and submerging on this new space from a young age. By taking the three beforementioned concepts a cohesive whole will be achieved as the object itself connects the user to its physical space, the notion of a new space make us aware of its immersive nature, and the device as a mirror will help understand the way self-perception and presentation is making the user more self-aware and thus help him or her control the desire impressions they wish to leave on the screen.

From Past to Present: A Historical Context of Smartphones' Research

Back in the 1800's, Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone, little did he know, his invention will evolve to the point where the communication device will work without cords and be operated by a touchscreen. The smartphone is the latest form of evolution of the telephone. It has changed, it's been reinvented but in essence it is still used for the same purpose: connect people on different ends. The telephone and its evolution has been widely studied on different areas but for the ends of this research we will only look at the *smartphone phase*, the telephone, the portable (or cordless) phone, and the cellphone will not be part of the research. The smartphone was first introduced in 2007 by the launching of the *IPhone* by *Apple*; so that's the years that will mark the beginning of our timeline. By smartphone it is understood that I will be talking about a "mobile phone that performs many of the functions of a computer, typically having a touchscreen interface, Internet access, and an operating system capable of running downloaded apps"[2] regardless of the fact that the term was first coined in 1980, the device it is referred to will, as it has been said, be seen as the mobile apparatus that was released in 2007.

In order to get an adequate context of what has already been researched we will look at publications divided on three different categories: those that deal with it from a psychological

[1] Data taken online from: https://www.statista.com/statistics/330695/number-of-smartphone-users-worldwide/

[2] Definition taken from the online version of *Oxford Dictionary*: https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/object

view, those that deal with the object, and those that deal with the smartphone from the point of view of humanities. By dividing the context this way, we will be able to observe the self, the object and the transcendence of it in our lives.

The field of psychology has a strong connection to this specific research as the use of the smartphone is dealt through mental perceptions and distortions of the understanding of the world. The conflict created by the use of a smartphone as a barrier of face-to-face interaction has been widely studied. This precedent cannot be ignored as it sets a foundation to the study of the self-to-self interaction mediated by a technological device. Back in 2012 Robert W. Proctor and E.J. Capaldi wrote *Psychology of Science: Implicit and Explicit Processes* a book that is mostly centered on the philosophy of science and in metascience in general but there's an important chapter in the book named "Cognitive Studies of Science" in which the authors treat the smartphone as an extended part of the memory of the user, as it keeps information that otherwise would be forgotten. The idea of the extended mind help us understand the object as collecting device that reflects the owner's vision of its own self. Three years later, in 2015 S. Shyam Sundar explored the use and abuse of social media and technological devices, as well as the social psychology behind the human-technology interaction in his *The Handbook of the Psychology of Communication Technology*. The publication deals with the immersive virtual environments as well as their deceptive characteristics, this type of analysis opens the way to the idea of the present thesis, as the smartphone works with immersive virtual environments to captivate the user. The immersive nature of the device has been studied form the point of view of specific apps that can help the user, like the study titled *Use of a Smartphone Application in the Treatment of Depression: The New Wave of Digital Tools in Psychological Treatment* written by Kien Hoa Ly in 2015. This books shows how an app can be used in order to treat depression by being accessible and providing help anywhere, anytime.

There have been other types of studies in the field of psychology that deal with the use and abuse of the smartphone in a more specific way, like the research conducted by Topor F. Sigmund in 2016. He explores the way globalization, technology, internet and the use of smartphones has impacted and shifted human education and development on his book *Handbook of Research on Individualism and Identity in the Globalized Digital Age*. These shifts include the issue of trusting your device instead of someone else, which is an issue analyzed in the same year by another author. On the article *The Social Costs of Ubiquitous Information: Consuming Information on Mobile Phones Is Associated with Lower Trust* written by Kostadin

Kushlev and Jason D.E. Proulx they study why the continual use of on-the-moment information has shifted trust in society. People now trust and rely more on their phones than on what a friend, family member or neighbor would tell them. Which take us to an impressive number of self-aid publications like *Addicted to Smartphone: How to Break 9 Bad Smartphone Habits* written by Can Akdeniz or *Sleeping with Your Smartphone: How to Break the 24/7 Habit and Change the Way You Work* written by Leslie Perlow, this type of publications, regardless of their non-academic nature, show the need of society to find a way to disconnect from their devices, it is also an approach to a practical problem that exists within contemporary society.

As some people become addicted to their smartphones and the idea of being connected has become a need, there is a massive consumption of the device. Which takes us to the next field of research: the smartphone as an object of consumption. This field is filled with publications like *The Smartphone Experiment* written by Pierre Khawand in 2007, in which the author tests a number of devices and explains the traits of each one and advises costumers on which is the best device depending on their needs. On the other hand, there are other types of publications like *The Smartphone: Anatomy of an Industry* written by Elizabeth Woyke in 2014. Which is a journalistic research and exposé of the billionaire industry that is the smartphone. The journalist goes into the unseen side of the industry such as exploitation of labor and the disposal of electronic waste. This type of research help contextualizes the idea of the thesis as there is an inevitable and undeniable attachment to smartphones and the need to acquire the newest and the best one which is creating an unseen number of electronic waste. The environmental and psychological issue have also been research from the humanities point of view, in which the authors reflect on the addiction, the object, the virtual relations and the humanistic ramifications of them.

Unlike the last field of research, within the humanities, there are numerous publications which have dealt with the issue of the smartphone. To understand the context of what has already been studied, the publications will be presented on a chronological manner. As it has been stated, the timeline of the research starts with the introduction of the smartphone to the market back in 2007, nevertheless, there are some academic publications that deal with the notion of the smartphone through the idea of the internet and the cellphone, as in a couple of years before the release, the cellphones were already changing and had some traits that are now seen on the smartphones. One of the publications written before 2007 is that of Maurizio

Ferraris who wrote *¿Dónde estás? Ontología del teléfono móvil* (Translation: Where are you? Ontology of the mobile phone) he studies the mobile phone as a social object. The author researched how the word phone is almost lost within the essence of the object, as it is now looked at as a fuller device, one that can perform the purpose of many devices. Because of the latter, he sees the mobile phone as a writing device instead of a communicating one. These traits are inherent to those of the smartphone and the ideas of Ferraris are even stronger when analyzing the smartphone at this day and age. A year after the launch of the smartphone, Haleph O'Neill used the device as a model for human and media interaction with a semiotic approach in his book *Interactive Media: The Semiotics of Embodied Interaction*. The smartphone appears only in a chapter as it used as one of the models of research, nevertheless, the phenomenon begins to be studied right after the launching of it. The year after, in 2009, Rosalía Winocur published a book titled *Robinson Crusoe ya tiene celular* (translation: Robinson Crusoe owns a cellphone) in which the concept of space is studied. The author writes about two types of spaces the public and the private space within the smartphone. The first space is insecure as it is the one that is attached to media and the outside, the second one is a close, secure space in which the youth is connected to. The concept of space is therefore introduced on an offline/online view, which helps the present research as it gives the basis on how secure spaces are created on virtual environments by analyzing the relations that happen within them. By 2010 Gunther R. Kress published the book *Multimodality: A Social Semiotic Approach to Contemporary Communication* which is written up on the basis of the study of multimodality and the research of the ways of contemporary communication by means of social semiotic. The author's 10th chapter: "The social semiotics of convergent mobile devices: new forms of composition and the transformation of the habitus" is of most relevance to the thesis field or research as it deals with the idea that the smartphone shapes both the *habitus* and the way we conceive our life-world. This idea is helpful for the research, as the habitus is an important part of the meaning-making process and also helps re-shaping identity and social identity, this last part is not studied on the mentioned book but is part of the thesis.

By the year 2015, a philosophical and self-discovering autobiography written by Joe Obidiegwu is published under the name *Finding Your Way To Heaven Without a Smartphone.* In this book, the author compares the world with and without technology. He reflects on the use of technology as a helpful tool for humans but at a certain point it started creating soulless bodies that cannot unplug and that are obsessed with fast-track information. These reflections

come from an author that has lived in Africa, America and Europe, therefore understanding different views of technology from various cultures. The ideas of culture and globalization are inherent to the use of the internet and the smartphone as some researchers argue that this type of technology is blinding new generations from their roots, while others see it as a way to approach it and embrace nationalism on online communities. An example of authors that research the latter idea are Martin A. M. Gasinger and Ayman Kole, on their book published in 2016: *Roots Reloaded. Culture, Identity and Social Development in the Digital Age,* they explore the smartphone and internet dependency and addiction through the use of different disciplines such as Art and Cultural Studies, Media and Communication, Behavioral Science, Psychology and Philosophy, in order to approach the way cultural heritage and individualism is showed and formed online. Another example that is in between the positive and negative ideas of globalization and loss of nationalism is *What Objects Mean, Second Edition: An Introduction to Material Culture* written by Arthur Asa Berger on the same year. In his research, six theoretical models are used to analyze eleven objects (one of them is the smartphone) in the context of globalization, identity and nationalism. Besides the study of globalization and nationalism, in 2016, the smartphone is studied as an invasive technology, an idea that is based on the logic of information, the informational metaphysics, the philosophy of data and the epistemic value of information as well as biosemiotics by Luciano Floridi in his *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Information.* The last publication that was reviewed is an article published by P. Hübner titled *Why do customers use smartphones for shopping in omnichannel environments? A conceptual extension of a special relationship between customers and devices*. This article studies the relationship between the user and their smartphones while purchasing through the device. It uses the ideas of the extended self, the extended mind, the digital doppelgänger and actor network theory; these ideas are all explored on the thesis but with a different approach as the article specializes on virtual shopping, while the thesis focuses on the user-object interaction and the doppelgänger is seen as a reflection rather than a lookalike.

The titles presented on this historical context are not the only ones that approach the topic of smartphones but they are the most relevant and the closest to the thesis field of research. As the titles were being read a realization came to mind, most of the research made on this field is about smartphone addiction and dependency, followed by the way this peculiar device has changed human behavior and social interaction; all while exploring the sense of nationalism and cultural identification on a globalized virtual environment. All of this shows the importance

of the use of the device in contemporary life as well as the need to study the phenomenon even further as the field is rather new, with the invention and invasion of the smartphone only nine years away. The context created by the reviewed publications showed the need to study the smartphone as a new space opened up by an object that creates a reflection of the user which will reflect back a created virtual identity that includes social identification. The smartphone is not a simple object an it should not be treated as so, it is a powerful social tool that can help researchers understand the dependency created by the device, as well as the ideologies and the aesthetics followed on different virtual platforms that are formed by the apps. Besides the study of the smartphone, social media has an impressive number of studies that explain the formation of virtual identity, these studies are not included as they have been researched on virtual presence regardless of the device used. The smartphone, as it will be explained in the content of the thesis, shifts the way a platform is viewed as it becomes mobile and thus is reachable 24/7. The smartphone as part of the everyday life of new generations and as a controllable space in which the identity is molded by the mirroring created on a meaning making object is a phenomenon that requires further studies.

Research Aim and Questions

The focus of the thesis is to understand the processes and phenomena that the user goes through when in use of the smartphone, with a triadic point of view; the smartphone understood as: an object, a new space that creates and modify interactions, and as a mirror that helps the user reflect on their own self by creating a distorted image that will be seen by both the user and others. The smartphone works as an object that collects information about its user as it is personalized through time, at the same time, it opens a space in which relations happen and create both a personal and a social reflection of the user. Think of a bedroom, when we enter a space that is so intimate and personal, the outsider can see the way the owner lives, if he or she is organized, their taste in decoration, if they like keeping a lot of things or if the things around are minimal, amongst other traits. The bedroom is a space that reflects the owner as it is entirely controlled by him/her, on this sense the smartphone does the same but on a different plane as it is located on a virtual sphere and it is filled with social interactions. Therefore, the general question that the thesis will answer is:

- When a smartphone is used its immersive technology captures the attention of the owner, making him/her unaware of their surroundings: What phenomena is taking place

on the object that blurs the physical surroundings and pulls the owner into a different space that alters the perception of reality, the self and society?

From this general question three specific questions will be answered on each chapter:

1. What is the impact of an object on the process of self and social identification?
2. What are the spaces (given and created) that interact within the smartphone?
3. How does the smartphone work as a mirror?

The aim of the research will therefore be to understand the semiotic process by which the user relates to the smartphone on the level of object, of space and as a social and personal mirror.

Thesis Outline and Theoretical Approach

The present thesis will deal with a current global phenomenon that has affected social relations as well as personal perception due to the use of a device that alters both: the smartphone. In order to understand the complexities and the processes that happen on the device and the user while in contact, the thesis will be divided in three main chapters; each one of them will explain and analyze the smartphone on seemingly different approaches. The first chapter will deal with the view of the device as an object, the second one with the space of the smartphone and the third one with the molding and the alterations of identity that are caused due to the mirroring capacities of the object. Thus, there are three general objectives to achieve:

I. Describe and analyze the smartphone as a social and personal object following the ideas of Baudrillard and Riggins.
II. Describe and analyze the space the smartphone user enters while using the device in general as well as with specific apps. The apps will be separated according to a typology created on the basis of Lefebvre's understanding of space.
III. Describe and analyze the mirroring capacities of the smartphone by the application of Lacan's, Mead's and Goffman's ideas.

The first chapter: "The Smartphone as an Object" will not only analyze the device as the thing itself, but as a social tool that can create a personal relation with the user by its capacity to absorb and mirror the relations and actions that happen on the everyday life of the user. Objects are an important part of our everyday life as they communicate what we cannot and they keep a personal and social memory embedded in them. They are an integral part of our

semiotic sphere and language. The object will therefore be seen as a carrier and a creator of meaning, as a recollection of the experience of the user and as a collecting device that can help reconstruct the social and mental reality of the owner by becoming an extension of the subject. To explain the latter, the first chapter will rely on different concepts and authors. On the first subchapter "Understanding the Object" the notion of the object as it is seen by Charles Sander Peirce's sign theory will be explained. After understanding the object from a semiotic point of view, a more specific approach will follow, that of defining the object in the field of social semiotics by the use of the ideas presented by Tomasello, Rosenstein, Knorr-Cetina and by the concepts presented on Riggin's *The Socialness of Things: Essays on the Socio-Semiotics of Objects*, as well as on Jean Baudrillard's *The System of Objects*. On the second sub-chapter "The Smartphone: Object, Medium, Mirror" the smartphone will be explained as an object that carries media and therefore becomes an extension of the self, this idea will be argued on the basis of Mulder and McLuhan and reinforced by Engeström and Blackler's idea of *quasi-objects* and the *ontological symmetry* created between the subject and the object, giving the object a mirroring capacity. With these concepts question "1" will be answered and objective "I" achieved.

On the second chapter "The Smartphone as a creator of a New Space" there will be a division into three subchapters in which the first one will explain the theory needed, while the second will be an analysis and the third an extension of the analysis with concrete examples. The first subchapter: "Understanding Space" will define space by using the ideas of Henry Lefebvre presented on his *Production of Space* in which space, specialized spaces and the spatial triad will be explained in order to create the context needed in order to understand the smartphone space. On this subchapter, the spaces that interact with the smartphone will be explained under Lefebvre's terms: social, mental, physical and virtual space. Once they have been defined, the second subchapter: "The Opened Space by the Smartphone" will analyze the creation of the new space opened up by the object by using the spatial triad and the interaction of Lefebvre's spaces on the object, while defining specific traits of the new space. In the final subchapter "The Sphere of the Apps" the specialized spaces within the smartphone will be describe and analyzed. To achieve the latter, a categorization of the apps will be shown and specific apps will be analyzed by using everyday examples. Once the analysis is done, Heidegger, Ferraris, Lefebvre, Turkle, and McLuhan will be used to explain the creation of a

worldness out of the smartphone space. Using these concepts, question "2" will be answered and objective "II" will be achieved.

On the third and last chapter: "Molding Individual and Social Identity through the Object and Space" question "3" will be answered and objective "III" achieved by uniting the ideas of chapter I and II into the idea of the object and the space as mirrors of the self and society. On the first subchapter: "The Mirroring Process" the concept of the mirror will be explained on the context of the smartphone with the use of the ideas of Jacques Lacan on both mirror and mirror-image, as well as those of Berger and Luckman regarding reality. In the second subchapter: "'I' and 'Me': Creating the 'Ideal-I'" the mirroring process will be taken further by explaining the personal and social mirroring phenomena that occur within the smartphone with the help of Herbert Mead's concept of "I" and "Me", McLuhan's ideas on the Narcissus myth and Goffman's controlled impressions on self-presentation. The latter will help build the process of self and social mirroring through the smartphone. Once this idea is grasped, some concrete examples will be used. Which will take the research to its last subchapter: "Beyond the Sphere and into our Everyday Life the Downfall of Privacy", in which McLuhan, Lacan, Berger and Luckman ideas will be further used to explain the processes of self-recognition and typification on the mirror-images created on the smartphone. There will also be some examples of the public domain that will help explain the loss of privacy by the mass consumption of the device.

By the end of the third chapter, there will be a well-rounded idea of the smartphone as an object, as a creator of a new space and as a mirror that alters self and social identity. Thus, on the conclusions there will be an overview and reflection of the chapters in which the direct answer to the general question will be posed.

CHAPTER I

THE SMARTPHONE AS AN OBJECT

I.I Understanding the Object

A popular definition of an object found on several dictionaries is a "material" thing that can be interacted with, we can see it and we can touch it. Another interesting definition is that of the object as a "a person or thing to which a specified action or feeling is directed". [3]An object, therefore, can be either a live being, a lifeless thing, a thought or a goal, as long as a specific deed is directed to it. Objects can be blended on the background or can have a special place in our lives depending on how much we project on them; in other words, whether we give them meaning or not. Objects are so much more than the "material thing" or the mental recall of it, as stated by Charles Sanders Peirce *sign-theory* an object transcends the popular definition and is an essential part of the meaning making process. Based on this theory alongside the ideas of Jean Baudrillard as well as the views on the field of social semiotics we will analyze a specific object that has come to be a part of our everyday life.

Charles S. Peirce is a well-known American philosopher who contributed to the field of semiotics with his work on *sign-theory*. In accordance to his work, a *sign* consists of a triad that is made up by a *representamen*, an *object* and an *interpretant*:

> *A sign, or representamen, is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. It addresses somebody, that is, creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign. That sign which it creates I call the interpretant of the first sign. The sign stands for something, its object. It stands for that object, not in all respects, but in reference to a sort of idea, which I have sometimes called the ground of the representamen. (Peirce on Nöth 1985: 42)*

In other words, the representamen will be the sign itself; that which in relation to the object and the interpretant will ultimately mean 'something' to 'someone'. This 'something' will vary in accordance to the relation of the representamen to the object, as specific traits of the object will

[3] Definition taken from the online version of *Oxford Dictionary*: https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/object

only be used depending on the relation. The object will also vary, as there are two types: the *immediate object* and the *dynamic object.* The former is the object as represented by the sign, whilst the latter will be the object independent of the sign which will lead to the production of more signs. Now, the interpretant (not to be confused with the interpreter) will be the sign in the mind, in other words, the result of what the sign stands for (Meyers on Colapietro, Olshewsky 1996: 19-29). It is easier to grasp with an example, take a semaphore with the red light on: the object is the action of stopping, we are dealing with a dynamic object as the object is independent of the sign; the representamen will be the red light as it refers to the object and the interpretant is the meaning we give to the representamen which will be to stop, but the interpretant can change and thus the same representamen can refer to a different object. Thus, the triad will look as follows:

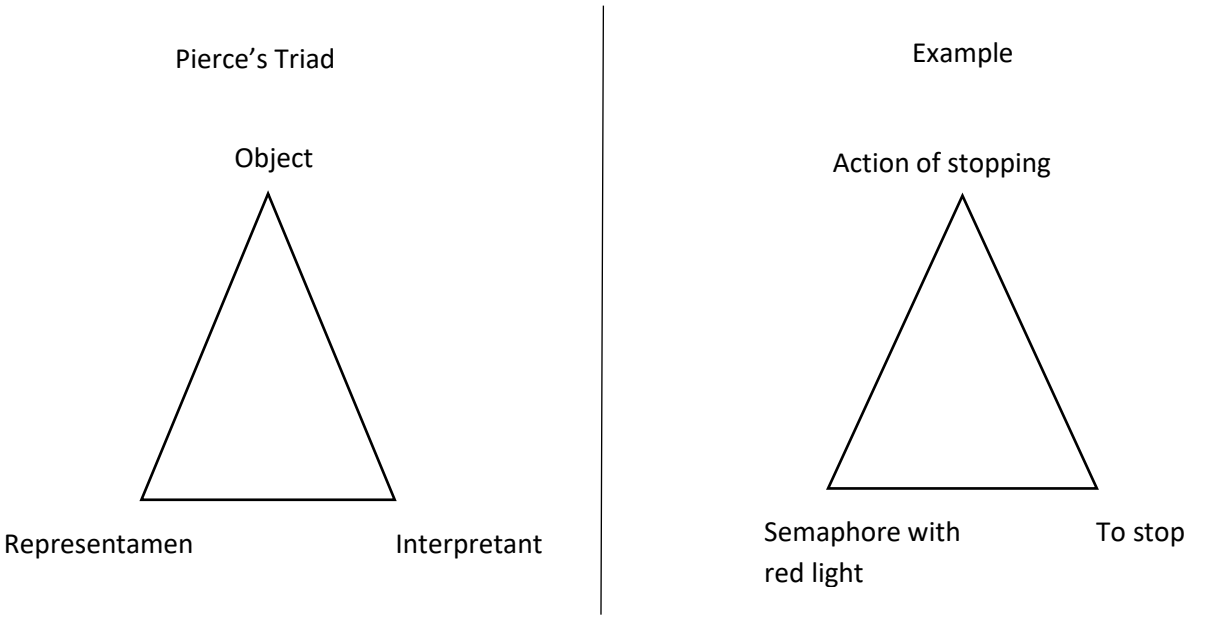


Figure 1. Peirce's Triad and example

Figure 1 shows a representation of Peirce's triad, as well as how it will be used on the example given. Once the triad is completed the process of semiosis occurs, and, as the interpretant can change, creating different signs, the process becomes infinite. This, of course, is a much-simplified version of the theory written by Charles Sanders Peirce but this basis will help us understand the perspective given to this chapter of the research, as it is now clear that when referring to an object, we do not only refer to a physical thing, rather, it is seen as an essential part in the process of semiosis.

Besides Peirce's definition and in accordance to the field of social semiotics, there has been an evolution on the understanding of the object within society and culture. The object is an essential part of the way we make sense of the world. There is a correlation between what the world stands for us and the objects we surround ourselves with. We take that relation and explain our actions, our thoughts, work, studies, relationships with ourselves and others with the help of objects. This idea is best explained by the American developmental and comparative psychologist Michael Tomasello:

> *By engaging in this imitative learning, the child joins the other person in affirming what "we" use this object "for": we use hammers for hammering and pencils for writing. After she has engaged in such a process the child comes to see some cultural objects and artifacts as having, in addition to their natural sensory-motor affordances, another set of what we might call intentional affordances based on her understanding of the intentional relations that other persons have with that object or artifact—that is, the intentional relations that other persons have to the world through the artifact. (Tomasello 1999: 84–5)*

The so called *intentional relations* show how the subject [4]and the object are connected and how that individual makes sense of it. On the example given by Tomasello, the individual is explaining how different objects serve different purposes, how they are used *for* a precise action. If we think of a concrete action like reading, we relate it to a book or an e-book, in other cases we might also relate it to the pair of glasses we need to perform that action. We are taking objects and embedding them to the way we understand and communicate with the world. This also works the other way around, if we see a bed we think of sleeping, or of a way to get some peace and rest. Thus, the objects help us achieve what we desire, and fulfill our actions. But the objects are not only related to the users by their *intentional affordances*, the relation goes deeper.

The object by itself might seem passive, silent, it is through the relation with society that it comes "alive", that it acquires meaning:

[4] When the term subject is used followed by the concept of object, it should be thought of the dyadic subject/object relation as understood by Kristeva: subject/object as complete identities and not only as opposed halves; Kristeva understood the terms as "self-sufficient meaning and with definable boundaries" which help the psychic separate itself from the other. (Wolfreys, Robbins, Womack 2002:1886)

> *Objects are instruments that their producers create to fulfill a particular utility; objects are durable and thus implicated in the history of those who possess and exchange them; objects are a means to materially recreate modes of existence in forms proscribed by social and cultural imperatives. (Rosenstein 2003: 140)*

Objects are part of history, of culture, of our everyday life, they help us build them and understand them. As Rosenstein explains they are specific to certain forms of living, they perform tasks and help us follow the guidelines of society and culture. As well as being an essential part of society they also help the individual express a certain level of uniqueness as it is through a series of personally chosen objects that the individual can show a form of conveying the world. Of course, objects are mostly made in mass production, but the way of presenting one's self will always have a variation in comparison to someone else's choices.

> *It is difficult to construct one's self, and to present that self to others, in the absence of objects which symbolize achieved and desired statuses. Artifacts are consequently powerful in their own right and not just in the sense of physically constraining human action. (Riggins 1994: 2)*

As it has been stated before, objects can be the reflection of an individual, of a community, society or even an entire culture or a specific moment in time. There are different levels of the reflection an object can achieve, depending on how much it is pour into it. This point will be further explained throughout the next chapters. Now, objects have been affected by their over mass production and others by their underproduction. This has lead the study of social semiotics to view objects through the filter of two different symbol systems. Conforming to the ideas based on *The Socialness of Things: Essays on the Socio-Semiotics of Objects,* we can see a distinction made on everyday objects and works of art. The *allographic symbol system* is used to view objects regardless of their *authenticity*, this are everyday objects that serve a purpose and do not stand out for being "one of a kind"; whilst the *autographic symbol system* judges objects based on their *authenticity*, this objects gain their value for being unique or limited, as paintings or works of art (Douglas on Riggins, 1994; 11-16). These phenomena goes beyond market value, both autographic and allographic objects can be bought and can be sold, the difference lies within the relation it has with its owner. A mirror can be a wonderful example: say you find a mirror on an antique shop, the mirror can be both allographic or autographic depending on its context. If it is bought as home décor without much regarding on where it

came from or who made it and only relaying on it being vintage, then it will only serve the purpose of a mirror, not standing out, therefore becoming allographic. If, on the other hand, the same mirror is bought on the same antique store but by someone who recognized it to have been owned by their great-grandmother who brought it home from a trip and for some reason ended being sold, then that discovery of the object becomes autographic, the relation between the object and the owner goes deeper than the solely purpose of the object, it becomes unique by the relation, not by being vintage or a limited edition.

The meaning and the value of an object comes hand in hand with its relation to the subject. There have been different views on this relation, whether objects alienate individuals, or they bring us closer to our surroundings, if they help us identify with others or with ourselves.

> *As signifying objects, commodities play an increasing role in a society saturated with abundance and which no longer suffers a lack of goods. Nonetheless, neither the sort of conspicuous consumption and the exchange of goods as symbols which ensues from abundance (Baudrillard), nor the Marxian notion of commodity defined by labor seem to entail the form of object relations found in expert cultures… the properties that characterize objectual relations in expert work would seem to be exactly the opposite: non-alienation and identification. (Knorr-Cetina 1997: 11–12)*

Object relations in accordance to Knorr-Cetina do not alienate us and help us with the process of identification. They are a central piece in the process of understanding society, when we unite the material with the social part we have a better chance to understand and to grasp the ideal and ideologies of a certain culture, time and space. Objects, as it has been stated before, reflect the individual and the collective. They transport their context from one era into another by carrying their meaning over time. They help us understand what has been done and where we are going. As Baudrillard says: "Civilization's first gesture is to hold up a mirror to the Object, but the Object is only seemingly reflected therein; in fact, it is the Object itself which is the mirror" (Baudrillard 1993: 172–173).

Object, as it has been stablished, can be understood on diverse ways depending on the approach given. This subchapter contains the main key points on how object is understood on the context of the present thesis. As several authors and concepts have been used in order to grasp the idea of the object, the following figure will help understand the concept of object and its divisions as understood on the research.

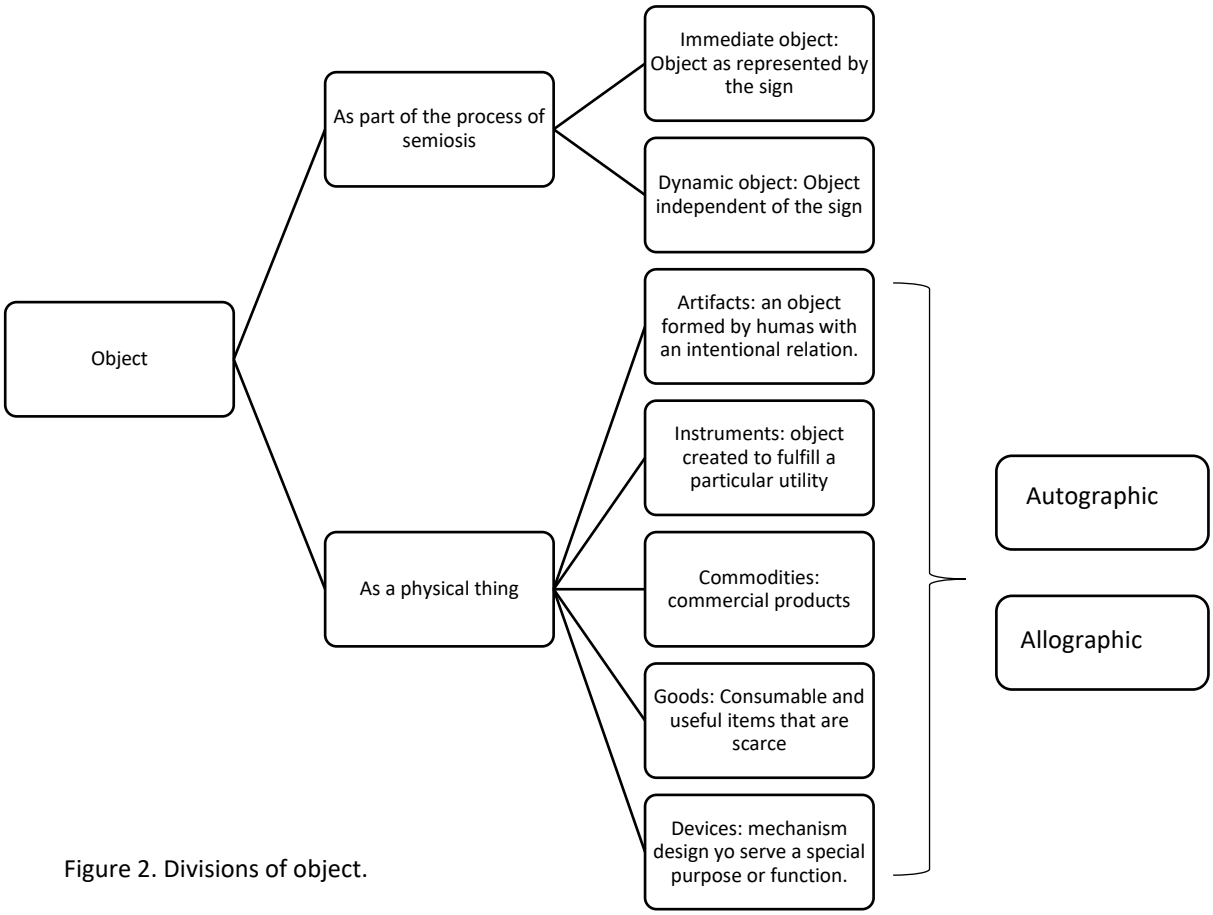


Figure 2. Divisions of object.

Figure 2 shows the division of objects, as the concept can be understood as a part of the process of semiosis or as a physical thing. The former is understood as independent from the physicality whilst the latter is attached to it. It can be named on many different ways, nevertheless, an object will always be created by humans and used for a specific purpose, depending on the use and the relation it has with the owner, the object can be either autographic or allographic, as it has already been explained. From this point forward, when an object is mentioned, it should be understood as the physical thing, when it is referred as part of the process of semiosis, it will be specified.

I.II The Smartphone: Object, Medium, Mirror.

Look around you, whether you are in the middle of a public, busy place or on the comfort of your home, there is an object that is persistent, that has become part of the landscape, that's in between human relations, that has come to be essential for some, a symbol of status

quo for others and a cause of great anxiety if it gets lost for most. That object that modestly vibrates on the inside of your pocket, or that cause a great disturbance when it emits sound in the middle of a quiet room. That object that seems to be on the hands or by the side everyone you look at: a smartphone. How is it that this object has come so far as to be by our reaching distance through day and night? How is it that this device has become so embedded on contemporary society that it has changed the way old and young generations relate to one another, and even further, how we interact with ourselves? As it has been said on the previous sub-chapter, objects hold a reflection of the owner, call it an individual or a collective. The smartphone is a very complex object that works on both levels, and that also falls within the two previously explained symbol systems, sometimes acting as allographic and sometimes autographic. On this particular case, I will be looking specifically at the autographic side of the object, explaining the process of the object as a reflection or mimic representation of the user. Moreover, I will also be looking at the object as part of Peirce's triad, and how it works as an immediate or a dynamic object, a representamen or an interpretant.

The smartphone revolution started approximately ten years ago with the launching of the *Iphone*, nowadays we have a variety of smartphones to choose from, some with *IOS*, others with *Android* and some with *Windows* operative systems. Whichever the operating system of the smartphone is, we can find that the physical appearance of the object, the hardware per se, has fallen into the same pattern with a little variation depending on the brand. The overall appearance of the object will be as follows:

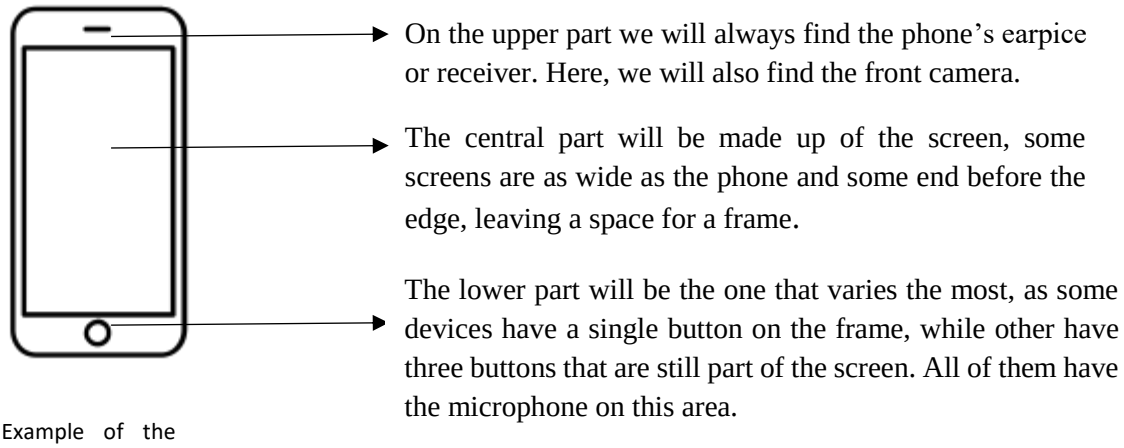


Figure 3. Example of the generic hardware appearance of the smartphone.

As for the backside of the phone, we will always find the back camera, the brand of the smartphone, and in some cases a fingerprint reader or the volume buttons. There is just a handful of variations on the appearance of the smartphone as the overall presentation is always the same, a rectangular device with a front and back camera, a power, volume and menu button and the biggest element in the center, the screen; as shown on Figure 3. The hardware of the smartphone is what keeps the relation between the user and its physical space, therefore it is important to notice its components as for it is them that the line between the physical space and the space of the smartphone is not completely blurred, as it will be explained on the next chapter. The device has been designed to fit a hand and to be operated with one's fingertips. Thus, when we refer to a smartphone, we refer to the generic concept of it, no brand or operating system in particular. To make it clearer, we will take the dictionary definition of it: "A mobile phone that performs many of the functions of a computer, typically having a touchscreen interface, Internet access, and an operating system capable of running downloaded apps"[5]. The evolution of the smartphone is now driven by the software and improvements on the existing hardware rather than coming up with different shapes. Every time an updated version of a smartphone hits the market, there's an improvement on the camera, a new version of the operating system, the size of the internal and external memory, the speed of the device and the quality of the screen. These changes are made to appeal to improvement, making the last version look obsolete while the new one holds the status of contemporary and appeals to the masses. This works very well with today's society, as stated by Baudrillard:

> *We can imagine that each individual feels unique while resembling everyone else: all we need is a schema of collective and mythological projection — a model [...] Everywhere today, in fact, the ideology of competition gives way to a "philosophy" of self-fulfillment. In a more integrated society individuals no longer compete for the possession of goods, they actualize themselves in consumption, each on his own. (Baudrillard 1968: 254-255)*

In accordance to the latter quote, society does not compete for goods but "actualize themselves in consumption", in other words, the individual pours personal characteristics to what is basically the same good everyone else has, but by having this or that model, self-fulfillment is

[5] Definition taken from the online version of *Oxford Dictionary*: https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/smartphone

achieved. Brands appeal to a certain type of person, making them feel as if they belong to a certain group, we see the same phone on different colors, different types of cases, some colorful, some others sober, there is a style and a color that will appeal to everyone. Helping the owner distinguish their own device from the rest. As Baudrillard says: "feel unique while resembling everyone else"; this phenomenon of being part of a specific consumer group while looking for uniqueness is also explained by Rosenstein's view on style:

> *'Style' is generally used to refer to the ways in which such qualities define sets of objects that correspond to human groupings of various kinds—civilizations, cultures, clans, guilds, schools, collaborations. Of course, all objects subjected to anthropological investigation have a style—i.e., some features through which they are analytically associated with the spatial, temporal, social, and/or cultural boundaries anthropologists use to define human groups. (Rosenstein 2003: 143)*

The smartphone falls into different styles and different human groupings, as while being overall generically looking on the outside, it can be embellished to fit the style of a certain individual by the addition of the phone case, gadgets like a smartwatch, or earpieces like earphones, wireless or not. The exterior becomes different thanks to the additives even though two people have the same exact phone. Regardless of the exterior appearance, whether embellished or not, the interior will always become personalized as it is the part of the object that will reflect the subject the most. When we buy a new smartphone, the device is given to us with preselected and preloaded apps that can be found on every new phone. This apps will eventually change in accordance to the subject's preferences and it will evolve from an allographic object to an autographic one. The smartphone by its own is a mass-produced object that can be sold and bought all around the world, it serves different purposes, but the main one is to stay connected, whether it is via phone call, texts, social media and what not, it first came up as an object *for* communication, staying on an allographic phase. As it evolved, its purpose became blurred, as now the numerous apps that can be downloaded to our smartphones have different purposes, serve a different desire and help us achieve different actions.

As it has been stated before, the smartphone is a complex object due to its versatility and the blurred purpose it has. If we go back to the beginnings of the telephone, it was created in an attempt to improve the state of the hearing impaired by the creation of visible speech through an electrical device that ended up being a telephone (McLuhan 1964: 293). Besides

being a complex object, the smartphone also works as a medium, as it extends our senses and works as a carrier of messages between two or more subjects, or even in between the same subject (the user) in different moments. The telephone was first used as a medium that worked as an extension of the ear and the voice, but now that it has evolved to a smartphone, not only the hearing and speaking is extended, but most of our senses are.

> *'Media are extensions of our senses into the public domain' (Marshall McLuhan). This is the specific definition of media. Every medium amplifies the function of a particular sense – the lens and the webcam extend the range of action of the eye. At the same time, that medium numbs or 'amputates' the remaining senses, such as smell and touch. […] Media are extensions of elements of the body, of the organs devoted to perceiving, monitoring and regulating that body. The senses are the organs that call forth emotions in the body. (Mulder 2006: 289)*

The smartphone holds together a series of objects and mediums on its inside that work by extending different senses. The smartphone as media does not only extend senses like sight or hearing, but perceptions and actions through space and time as Mulder explains "a more common definition is: a medium is a technological or artificial extension of a bodily faculty. This concept of medium encompasses more than just the senses" (ibid.). We have calendar and alarms, photos and videos that help the extension of memory, voice recorder and messages via audio or text as well as phone calls that extend the voice, maps that extend the sight and perception of our surroundings, board games that have been translated into apps which help us play with someone that is not physically there. Each app and function on the smartphone work as a mediator between us and the world, as it helps us extend through time and space; this point will be further explained on the next chapter.

The smartphone as it has been stated before, can be on an autographic or allographic state depending on its use, in order to understand the object as an extension, and as a medium of the subject we have to think about it on its autographic state. That is, once several connections are made within the smartphone: it is linked to the user's account (call it an *Apple's* account or a *Gmail* account) and it contains the user's information; this information will come in many forms: visual information as photos, personal information, likes and dislikes, search history, call logs, contacts, any kind of inscription; inscriptions will be further explained on the next chapter. Overall the autographic state of the object can only be truly achieved once the user has

pour in a reflection of his or her everyday life. The object works by both having a service carrier and a connection to internet whether by Wi-Fi or mobile data, it is a device that is connected to social media and with which we can share and save documents, pictures, data, videos and all kinds of information. Therefore, we can use the smartphone as a solely interaction with ourselves, it is not necessary to have someone on the line to interact with the object. McLuhan wrote the contrary about the telephone "it is a participant form that demands a partner, with all the intensity of electric polarity. It simply will not act as a background instrument like radio" (McLuhan 1964: 292) this shows how the smartphone has now changed into a form in which we do not necessarily need a partner, thus a dichotomy is created as a feeling of loneliness arises whilst being able to connect with others is simpler and faster: being alone while feeling accompanied. This point will be further explained on the next chapter.

Given these points of extension of the human senses on the object, some theorists have a more drastic approach on technological devices such as the smartphone as they see it as a *hybrid* between human and object. This is best explained in the words of Engeström and Blackler:

> *[…] the emergence of 'quasi-objects' or 'monsters' (such as gene technologies, ozone layers and computer systems), which have become so powerfully omnipresent that their existence can no longer be ignored. Theorists in this tradition have talked of the hybrid character of people and things, and of the 'ontological symmetry' of humans and non-humans. For them, objects take on the characteristics of humans: they judge, they form networks, they speak, they work performatively. This style of analysis dramatically questions traditional assumptions; as objects begin to take on agency, the dominant divides between subjects and objects and between ideality and materiality are inevitably called into question. (Engeström; Blackler 2005: 309)*

Objects are treated as one with the subject, as they can work on both planes. Smartphones, on this note, work as objects as they serve a purpose, they help achieve goals but they also become subjects as they respond, *form networks*, depending on the use we have on them, they can objectify the user and become subjects as well as work the other way around. Smartphones as smart-technology have the ability to gather information from the user's emails, messages, shopping carts and overall browsing and app history in order to advice actions. For example, say the user buys a plane ticket online, the information of the flight is sent to the user's email, then the device gathers the information and on the date of the flight creates automatic alarms

and sends notification on when to leave for your flight and on which is the best route to take, it can also advice to take a train, a bus, a taxi or, if the user has the app[6], *Uber* or *Taxify*[7]. Thus, the user becomes the receiver and the smartphone the adviser. A smartphone, as it has been stated before, becomes personalized and autographic once the user starts pouring their information into it; it is only then when the object becomes an extension of the subject. When the smartphone is taken, and used by someone who is not the original owner, then the other can see us from the perspective of the object; pictures, personal information, notes, messages, social media usage, banking information, email, work relations, schedules…every part of our lives can be related to an app, we become one with the object. There is where the *ontological symmetry* emerges. We can identify the subject with the object as the smartphone works as a collecting device in which a state of mimicry is achieved, the subject is reflected on the object as the user's self-experience and relation with society is shown by the use given to the object. The apps, the images, videos, information, notes and accounts all recreate a certain side of the user, by browsing through it, a third party is able to grasp a general idea and create a certain image of the owner. The object is the mirror of the subject, it mimics and extends its senses and creates an image that can be manipulated. This mirror opens a new space in which the users submerge themselves, this space where the symmetry is created will be explained on the next chapter.

The smartphone as an autographic object reflects the user but it is not the only reflection created, as the society he/she lives in is also seemingly reflected therein. The smartphone becomes a recipient in which history, experiences and specific world's perceptions are poured in. But not only that, as social interactions are present culture, language, religion, ideologies and every other component of a social life is imbedded within the reflection. The reflecting relation between the object and the user creates a connection that is hyphenated by the invasiveness of the smartphone's nature. The virtual environment in which the user enters every time he/she uses the smartphone creates a whole "worldness" away from the physical space and draws the user into a different kind of space.

[6] App stands for the abbreviation of application. It is a software that performs a special function, apps on smartphones can be downloaded whilst on computers they cannot.

[7] *Uber* is an app that help the user get a private driver from their location to their required destination, *Taxify* is a different app that help the user get taxis on their location.

CHAPTER II

THE SMARTPHONE AS A CREATOR OF A NEW SPACE

In the previous chapter, we understood the smartphone as an object that works as an extension of the subject, as well as a carrier of the reflection of the subject due to an *ontological symmetry*. As it has been stated, the symmetry is created on the space opened by the object. In this chapter, we will first define space, then explain how it works on the device and lastly analyze the way space differs depending on the type of app that is being used.

II.I Understanding Space

Hold your smartphone in your hand, the central part of it, as well as the one we interact with the most, is the screen, a screen that can be touch and respond to the movement of our fingertips. This interaction is the one that allows us to download apps, to zoom into pictures, to select whatever file we want and overall relate to it. The screen is silent, dark, motionless, when it is not in being used, once we touch that screen the wallpaper we chose, the light and color comes to be seen. The smartphone opens up to us every time we come in contact with it. This type of object works with both illusion and reality as different apps aim to different goals: hedonism, work, performance, finance, etc.

> *Objects hide something very important, and they do so all the more effectively inasmuch as we (i.e. the 'subject') cannot do without them; inasmuch, too, as they do give us pleasure, be it illusory or real (and how can illusion and reality be distinguished in the realm of pleasure?). But appearances and illusion are located not in the use made of things or in the pleasure derived from them, but rather within things themselves, for things are the substrate of mendacious signs and meanings. (Lefebvre 1991:81)*

As Lefebvre states, objects have different layers and within them we can find deceiving signs that will create a reality for the subject. Focusing on the smartphone, we can find different layers and different signs and meanings emerging from the several apps and widgets[8] we use.

[8] A widget is "a component of an interface, that enables a user to perform a function or access a service" they differ from apps as their use is limited, they exist within the software of the smartphone and thus cannot be downloaded. The definition was taken from the online version of *Oxford Dictionary*: https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/widget

Depending on the subject, these signs and meanings will vary as each object contain a different narrative, a narrative created and manipulated by the owner. Narratives emerge when the device has become an autographic object, the chain of messages, the emails, audio messages, videos, gifs, images, everything that contains a message and a meaning helps build the overall narrative of the object and, therefore, of the user. Regardless of the specific user, the same phenomena occur within the same space: that of the smartphone. The general idea of space is that of a free or occupied area, a gap between objects, people, words, that which is in between the earth and the universe, the cosmos, overall it is thought of as the extension in which everything exists[9]. But, in accordance to Lefebvre, we can understand space on a different basis:

> *Specialized works keep their audience abreast of all sorts of equally specialized spaces: leisure, work, play, transportation, public facilities - all are spoken of in spatial terms. Even illness and madness are supposed by some specialists to have their own peculiar space. We are thus confronted by an indefinite multitude of spaces, each one piled upon, or perhaps contained within the next: geographical, economic, demographic, sociological, ecological, political, commercial, national, continental, global. Not to mention nature's (physical) space, the space of (energy) flows, and so on. (Lefebvre 1991: 8)*

Space will therefore vary according to the diversity of objects, works, the outcome and the general purpose, as well as by its mediations and mediators (Lefebvre 1991: 77). It will not only be a matter of physical constraining areas or gaps, a space will be created by that who experiences it; it will encompass culture and our individual understanding of the world. Space is thus a social matter, and as a production of society it can be grasped on different ways according to Lefebvre's spatial triad:

- *Spatial practice* (also known as "First space" or perceived space): This is the view of the perceived space, it encompasses the production and reproduction of specific characteristics of locations based on social formation. (Lefebvre 1991: 33)
- *Representations of space* (also known as "Second space" or conceived space): is the space that we live and experience, it is based on our mental construct, on relations and

[9] Definition taken from the online version of *Oxford Dictionary*: https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/space

knowledge. Representations of spaces may differ as they may not always be cohesive, they do not follow a set of rules. (ibid.)

- *Representational space* (also known as "Third space" or lived space): locations with complex symbolisms that are tied to social life and social practice. Representational spaces are mostly linked to art and professional discourse. (ibid.)

As we can see, there are three ways of grasping space but we cannot conceive one without the other, the unity of the three is what constitutes the production of a new space. There is no understanding of the spatial practice if there is no understanding of the representations of space and representational spaces, in other words, we cannot conceive space if we do not experience it and live it, and by doing so we are also experiencing the representations that were socially constructed before us.

> *A social space cannot be adequately accounted for either by nature (climate, site) or by its previous history. Nor does the growth of the forces of production give rise in any direct causal fashion to a particular space or a particular time. Mediations, and mediators, have to be taken into consideration: the action of groups, factors within knowledge, within ideology, or within the domain of representations. Social space contains a great diversity of objects, both natural and social, including the networks and pathways which facilitate the exchange of material things and information. Such 'objects' are thus not only things but also relations. As objects, they possess discernible peculiarities, contour and form. (Lefebvre 1991:77)*

Social space is everchanging as it is molded by its mediators and mediations, it is affected by ideology and thus entirely depends and varies through social perception. It is within this realm that we can analyze the space opened by the smartphone. In the interest of understanding the new open space, the spaces that interact with the smartphone must first be explained. There are four types of spaces that are explained by Lefebvre:

1. Social space: This space is produced by social understanding, it encompasses cultural inferences combined with the individual understanding of the world created by social interactions: "Itself the outcome of past actions, social space is what permits fresh actions to occur, while suggesting others and prohibiting yet others" (Lefebvre 1991:73). The social space emerges from experience and social variance; as it is created

by social relations. Hence this space will come into being when the individual is in contact with others.

2. Mental space: It is a sort of 'personal space' "where the consciousness of the 'subject' – 'or self-consciousness' – take form" (Lefebvre 1991: 236). The mental space is linked to the previous space, nevertheless it is here where the relations and the experience is processed and becomes signified. It is the space of semiosis.
3. Physical space: This type of space depends on the interaction with physical perceptions, it is our geographical location, our physical surroundings.
4. Virtual space: As opposed to the physical space, this type of space is a simulation of physical realm. Virtual spaces can be found as representational spaces, as they are based on the depictions of the physical, mental and social realm. A clear example of this type of space is the one found on the internet, videogames, television, theater or other art forms.

The spaces presented are all intertwined: while being on a social space the user is existing on a physical space and reflecting on it by use of the mental space, all of it can also happen while interacting with a virtual space. These four spaces interact with the smartphone user and thus help with the creation of the smartphone space. Which will be further explained on the next subchapter.

II.II The Opened Space by the Smartphone

Space is a complex concept as it comprises physical, social and ideological factors. It metamorphoses in accordance to the relations that act on it, call it subject-object or sociocultural relations. As it is such a wide concept and can be divided in so many different categories, boundaries are needed to explain a certain space, to fully understand what is taken into account and what not.

> *Figurative terms such as 'sheet' and 'stratum' have serious drawbacks: being metaphorical rather than conceptual, they assimilate space to things and thus relegate its concept to the realm of abstraction. Visible boundaries, such as walls or enclosures in general, give rise for their part to an appearance of separation between spaces where in fact what exists is an ambiguous continuity. The space of a room, bedroom, house or garden may be cut off in a sense from social space by barriers and walls, by all the signs of private property, yet still remain fundamentally part of that space. Nor can*

> *such spaces be considered empty 'mediums', in the sense of containers distinct from their contents. (Lefebvre 1991:87)*

The limit of the smartphone is its own physicality, the screen will be the beginning and the end of it. Even though it may seem as a limited and specific space it will affect all the other spaces that interact with it and all the other forms of experience of the user. Sherry Turkle a professor of the Social Studies of Science and Technology at MIT has research and study the connection between technology and the self. In her studies, she has found that indeed the technology user enters a new space when interacting with a technological device such as the smartphone:

> *For the most part, our everyday language for talking about technology's effects assumes a life on both on and off the screen: it assumes the existence of separate worlds, plugged and unplugged. But some of today's locutions suggest a new placement of the subject, such as when we say, 'I'll be on my cell', by which we mean 'You can reach me; my cell phone will be on, and I am wired into (social) existence through it'. On my cell, online, on the web, on instant messaging- these phrases suggest a new place for the situation of a tethered self. (Turkle 2006: 2)*

The online and the offline worlds collide as the user is always fixed to its device, this idea as well as the concept of the *tethered self* will be explained further on this chapter. Turkle explains the new space as a creation of the connection between the user and the object and the relations that happen within the device. But the relation between spaces and more specifically what happens during the interaction with certain apps is out of the explanation.

While in the use of a smartphone, the space becomes blurred, the user stands in between what can be consider as the real world, the physical realm, and a brand-new space that is brought by the object. Spaces clash and become one with another, therefore boundaries are needed to fully understand what is happening when we are using this type of device. When a user turns on a smartphone, different spaces come into being. As it has been explained on the previous subchapter, there are four types of spaces that must be taken into consideration to understand the smartphone space: social, mental, physical and virtual space. The smartphone user falls in the middle of them:

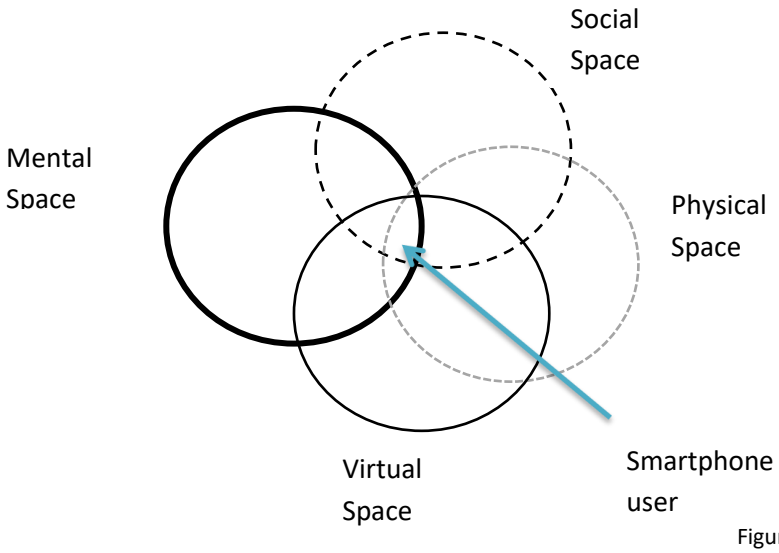


Figure 4. The interacting spaces within the smartphone

Figure 4 shows the relation created amongst the four different spaces and the smartphone user. As it can be seen, there's an overlapping of the spaces but the limits are different, as some are well defined whilst others seem blurred. To further understand the relation of the spaces in which the smartphone user's falls in the middle of, an explanation of each space will be given:

Social space — The social space in the smartphone will appear when the user is interacting with others, by use of communications and social apps, such as phone, messages or any social media. This space, as explained above, is defined by sociability, in other words, by connections with others. The line in the diagram, therefore, is dashed as social connections within the device are intermittent.

Mental space — The mental space will play a very important part when the user is interacting with the smartphone. Every time an action is done it is reflected on the mental space and transferred to the space of the smartphone, either in a conscious or unconscious manner. Thoughts, reminders, notes, saved documents as well as inscriptions, all come from the mental space, here is where the ideal- I will be formed (this idea will be further explained on the next chapter) hence, the relation between the smartphone space and the mental space is the strongest. Thus, the line, as the connection, is thicker.

Virtual space	The virtual space on smartphone will work on different levels, the smartphone itself is a representational space as it is a simulation of the physical realm but that goes beyond representation once relations, connections and specialized work is being done in the object. The virtual space will come on the form of interface. The virtual space will always be present on the smartphone but it will vary as the interface changes from app to app, hence the line in the diagram is thinner but constant.
Physical space	Where the user is standing on a geographical and cartesian space, the physical space is related to our physical surroundings, when the smartphone is being used, perceptions are limited as the attention of the user is compromised as the object does not offer transparency. Thus, the user's attention is "completely monopolized by the device […] we look at the monitor of the smartphone losing any link with the surroundings" (Gadducci et al 2015: 211). Therefore, as the connection between the user and the physical space is compromised by the lack of transparency of the device, the line in the diagram appears faded and discontinuous.

The space of the smartphone is limited by the object, by the limit of what is shown and reflected on the screen. Hence, we will be referring at what happens on the inside of the screen as a reflection of what happens outside of it: the eternal philosophical dichotomy of the inside and the outside. This dichotomy is extended and multiplied within the object, as there will be an inside and outside of apps this will be further explained on the next subchapter as the dichotomy is extended through the apps.

The smartphone, as it has been stated, opens a new space, but what does that mean? A smartphone is a device that helps connect and interact with other people as well as with ourselves, it is a space where we will never be alone as there is a significant number of apps that show us what the other is doing, regardless of them being online or not. This new way of interaction with society is what creates a new space, relations change, communication evolves, meanings differ. The production of this new space is defined by what has been mentioned before as the Spatial Triad:

- *Spatial practice* ("First space" or perceived space): The smartphone as a physical object has come to be cohesive, as it has been explained on the previous chapter, there is a general and generic construction of the smartphone with only technical variations, the overall device has specific traits that have come to be part of the social imagination.
- *Representations of space* ("Second space" or conceived space): The interactions that happen within the smartphone make up this second space. Our mental construct and social relations are experienced and lived with the help of the device, we can have face to face interactions with others as well as with ourselves. It is a space of experience.
- *Representational space* ("Third space" or lived space): The third space is linked to professional and specialized works, it is constructed by complex symbolism tied to social life. The smartphone is based on different apps, each one with a specific work, each one tied to a different type of relation, whether social or personal, in them, the user interacts with different discourses and experiences.

As the user of the smartphone can perceive, conceive and live the space of the smartphone while being in constant relation with other types of spaces like the ones mention on Figure 4 and is able to go from one to another without complication as well as create different types of relations, the space of the smartphone is created.

The smartphone space is rather new therefore the outcome of this type of interactions is yet to come. Despite not knowing specifically the long-term consequences of the continuous use of the object, we have seen new addictions: social media addicts, smartphone addicts and an increase on isolation (Benyoucef; Weiss; Mili 2015: 224-233). The smartphone helps us always stay connected, it is a way in which privacy is lost, on the days of the home telephone, we had to call a specific place, wait for the right person to answer or proceed to ask for someone, we knew where the person was as the object was linked and fixed to a specific geographical and physical location. With the invention of the cellphone that changed, as you could move around with it, but still had to stay within the service area of the carrier. With the evolution of the cellphone into the smartphone, the places where the object can be used have been extended. We can now use the service carrier, a random or personal Wi-Fi connection, or mobile data. The object is not fixed to specific endpoint of a wired electric system, rather it is now wireless and reachable through different networks. We are not fixed to a specific geographical place anymore rather the object is fixed to us, the user becomes the endpoint of the network; therefore,

we become reachable, the sense of loneliness and privacy is, if not entirely lost, blurred. This idea of permanent connection and the loss of loneliness has been explained as *tethered self.* To be tethered is to be attached to a line, for example a dog on a leash or a climber to a rope; the idea of being attached to electronical devices has been explained by Sherry Turkle by using the idea of being "always on, always connected" (Turkle 2006) she explains that a device as a cellphone or a computer keep their users tethered to them, but not only to the device, rather "people are tether to the gratifications offer by their online selves "(Turkle 2006:7) to that which will be explained on the next chapter as the *imago*. The idea presented by Turkle views the user of smart technologies as obsessed with instant responses and relying their emotions entirely to social response, therefore neglecting self-reflection instead of enhancing it.

> *Connectivity brings complications. Online life provides plenty of room for individual experimentation, but it can be hard to escape from new group demands. It is common for friends to expect that their friends will stay available—a technology-enabled social contract demands continual peer presence. And the tethered self becomes accustomed to its support. (Turkle 2011: 174)*

The fact that the online life now moves with us wherever we go reinforces the attachment, as we can browse through the different spheres of the "online life" whenever, wherever. The new space opened by the smartphone is where the tethered self comes from, as it is in this space that the connections and attachment are formed, where the blurriness of the limits occur. As it has been stated on Figure 4, the physical space is faded while the mental and social spaces through a virtual space are stronger. There is a very interesting add by *Samsung* that shows the matters of the limits between the virtual and the physical space, the marketing campaign is called "Unbox your phone" and it's the advertising motto for their newest version of the *Galaxy* smartphone, the *Galaxy S8* and *S8+*. Here is one of the images used on the campaign:

Image 1. Samsung ad. [10]

Image 1 shows the campaign that advertises a smartphone that is composed of a bigger a screen, a screen that is bended over the edges and thus blurs the limits of the device. On the image shown above we can see that there's a continuity between what is shown outside and inside the screen, showing how the limits between physical and the virtual space are almost non-existence and thus combining everyday reality with the virtual reality, enhancing the experience of reality through visual input. What is happening with this device is called *augmented reality*, it "allows the user to see the real world, with virtual objects superimposed upon or composited with the real world […] augmented reality can be thought of as the blend, or the 'middle ground', between the completely synthetic and the completely real" (Kipper, Rampolla 2012: 1). As the device mixes realities, it also mixes spaces, making the user feel as if the physical space and everyday reality is one with the virtual space and virtual reality therefore reinforcing the tetheredness.

As it has been pointed out, the smartphone is the space in which anyone is reachable as it is a product of relations, either by a phone call, a videocall, a text, a picture, we can use whatever type of interaction we want and we can reach the other, we can use all our senses as we do on the off-line world. We are living in an era in which information moves faster and faster, we can share our location, our feelings, pictures and videos with only touching a screen, we can experience the world through the eyes of the other, we can interact without touching, talk face to face through our screen and extend our space further and further, but let us

[10] The image was taken from the *Samsung* official website for the *Galaxy S8/S8+* campaign: http://www.samsung.com/us/business/discover/galaxy-s8-for-enterprise/

remember *"Too much space smother much more than if there were not enough" (Supervielle on Bachelard 1957: 260).*

II.III The Sphere of the Apps

The interface of the smartphone works as a window to a new space which is controllable, all through a series of apps and widgets that aim to a specific purpose, we have an app for videocalls, another one for sending messages, others for sharing pictures, dating, checking our balance accounts, sending money, several games; we have an ungraspable number of apps to help us do and achieve actions on our everyday life. These apps will vary from screen to screen as individual spheres are created according to the user. A smartphone from an American teenager will vary greatly from that of a sixty-year-old from China, as the use of new apps, restrictions and overall understanding of the device will vary greatly. A simple example of this is that of *Facebook*, in the US, the social platform comes as a pre-loaded app on most smartphones, while on China, said app is blocked by governmental restrictions; other examples of banned apps are *Snapchat* and *Pinterest* [11]. Therefore, the content of the smartphone will never come as a generic look as that of the hardware, but will be different for each user depending on personal taste and what is available to them on their geographical location. There is an impressive number of apps, there are some that are only available on certain devices, others that are brand-exclusive, software-exclusive, even exclusive to a certain version of the software. It is almost impossible to state a specific number of existing apps, as everyday there are new ones and everyday there are some that disappear. Thus, in order to grasp what is happening with the use of the apps on the device, we will divide them in eight general categories, that will include all the apps without mentioning them. These categories are created according to those found on the *Android's Play Store* and on the *Apple's ITunes.*

[11] According to CNN TECH, the mentioned apps as well as the websites version of them are banned in China, if someone attempts to use them, an error page will appear. Facebook has been banned since 2009 and Pinterest has been banned since the beginning of 2017. Nevertheless, this restriction can be avoided by the use of a VPN. For more on the matter visit: http://money.cnn.com/gallery/technology/2016/05/23/banned-china-10/4.html

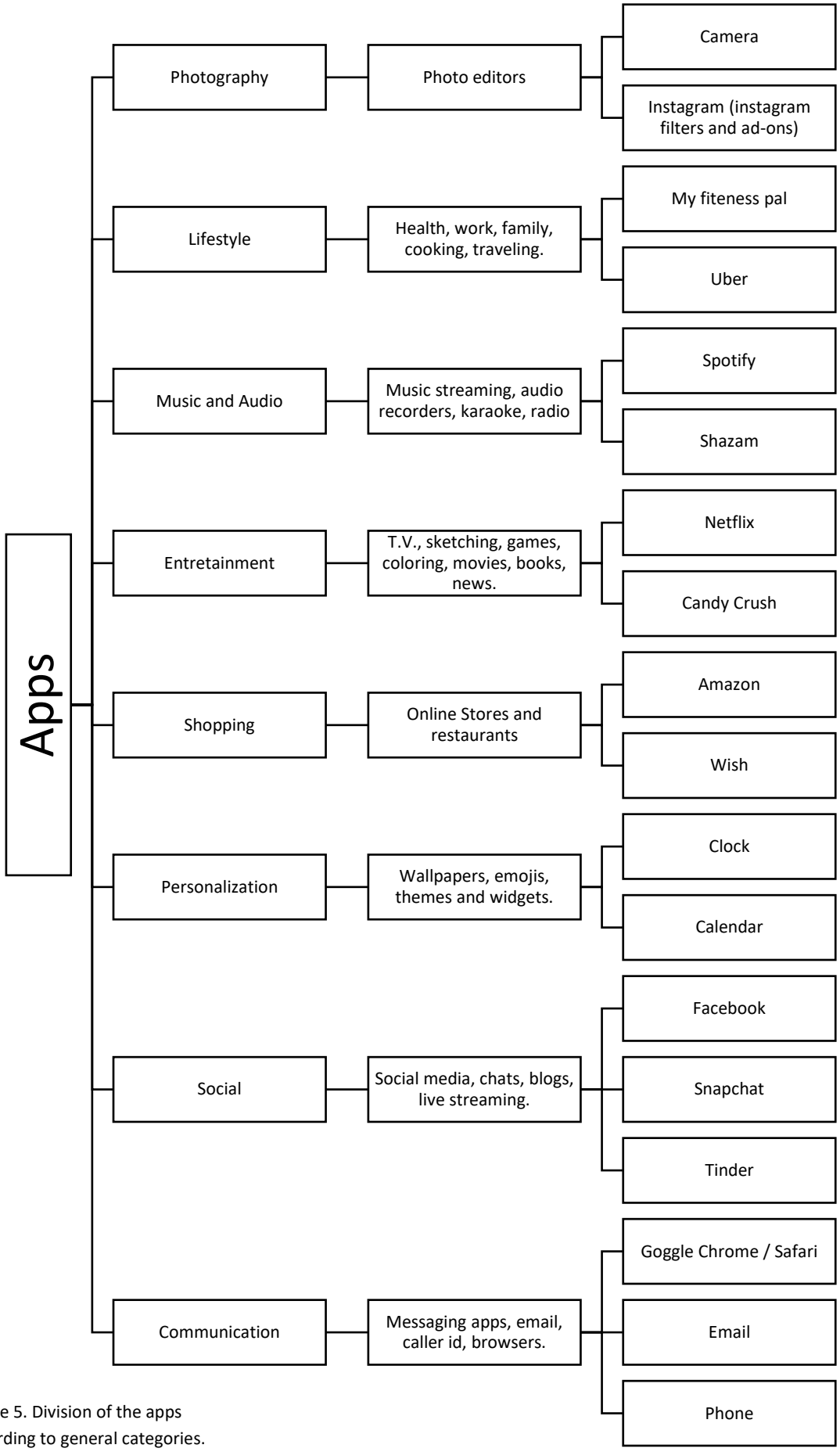


Figure 5. Division of the apps according to general categories.

Figure 5 shows a general division of the apps that are offered on the two-mayor smartphone operative systems' app stores. The categories are not clear cut as some of the apps can fall on more than one category, while others only fit in one, depending on how complex its use it. For example, an app that comes pre-installed on most smartphones: *Facebook,* falls on various categories – communication, social, entertainment, and most recently, shopping – it is a complex app that links with other apps and uses most of the communication options available on the device, it is possible to share visual and audiovisual content, engage in a video or voice call, send written messages, show your location as well as transmit a live video. The app is listed under the category of "Social" as on its description on the app store it states it is an app for "keeping up with friends"[12]. This app also links to other apps, for example, when we download a game, we can keep scores and play with friends by login in our *Facebook* profile. Another example will be *Instagram* that falls under the same categories as the previous app plus photography, as we can manipulate images. Categories are not clear cut and apps work with both engaging on a main focus while helping develop others. As it has been stated before, apps fall and interact with the surrounding spaces on a different way, depending on the action they achieve and the way they interact with the user. To explain this, two categories will be explained with a specific example from each one: "Lifestyle" and "Social".

Starting with the category of "Lifestyle", in Figure 5, its general use has been explained as for health, work, family, cooking or travelling related apps. I will be taking the example of an app called *MyFitnessPal.* This app has 50 million downloads and has been rated with 4.6 stars by more than 1 million users on the *Android Play Store,* as it is shown on Image 2. *MyFitnessPal* is a calorie counter that has different settings. To start using the app, a questionnaire must be answered; it requires data such as height, weight, age and the level of physical activity the user performs. Once the data is filled, goals are set: whether the app will help you lose, gain or maintain weight by setting a daily calorie goal. Once all the goals and data are set, the user can start logging in what they eat by either writing it down or scanning the bar code of the

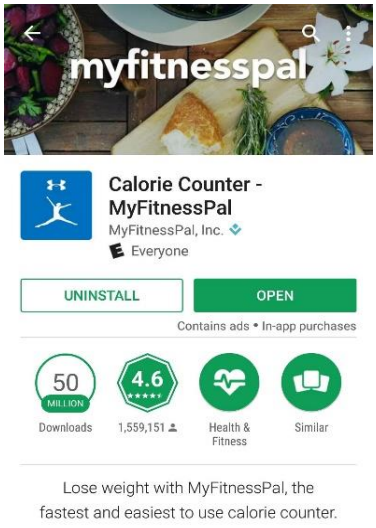


Image 2. View of app in the app store

[12] The quote can be read on Android's *Play Store,* as there is no link available to the quote unless it is search on an *Android* smartphone.

product. They can log the food as breakfast, lunch, dinner or snack, they can also log the water intake and the amount of exercise performed that day. Each log of food will subtract from the daily number of calories allowed, if the person logs an exercise they will gain more calories to eat, and so on. This part of the app is called the "Diary", it is personal and can be kept private, there is also a "Progress", "Goals", "Nutrition", "Blog" and "Community" sections. The first three can only be seen by the user, and the last two add a social component to the app, as you can interact with other app users by sending messages, friending them and sharing your "Diary". Therefore, the app will work on various spaces and create different relations according to the actions performed on the app. The first interaction will deal with both the mental space and the physical space as the questionnaire is based on self-perceptions and numbers about the physical body. Next a social space will be created inside a virtual space: the social space will come from the interaction and relations created within the "Community" and "Blog" sections of the app. This will come as a choice for the user, as they can befriend other users or choose to use the app only by themselves. If interaction is chosen and the user starts befriending other users, they will come to find that a specific narrative and behavior is expected within the interacting sections. There will be automatic messages created everyday as soon as the diary is closed for that day, here is an example of the automatic message:

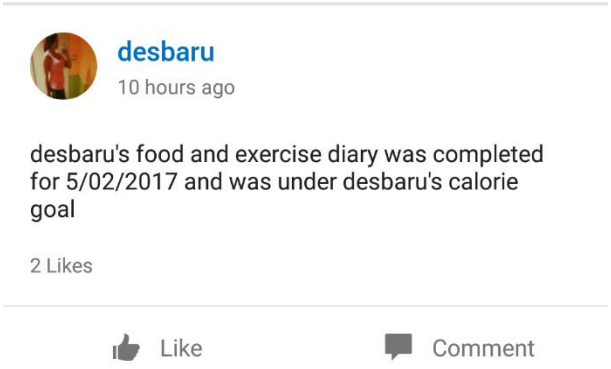


Image 3. Example of automatic message on app.

Image 3 show the messages that can be "liked" or commented by other users. As they show that the user has gone through the day without breaking their calorie intake; a certain language is expected as users are encouraged to use this platform as a safe space to share and celebrate ones and others achievements:

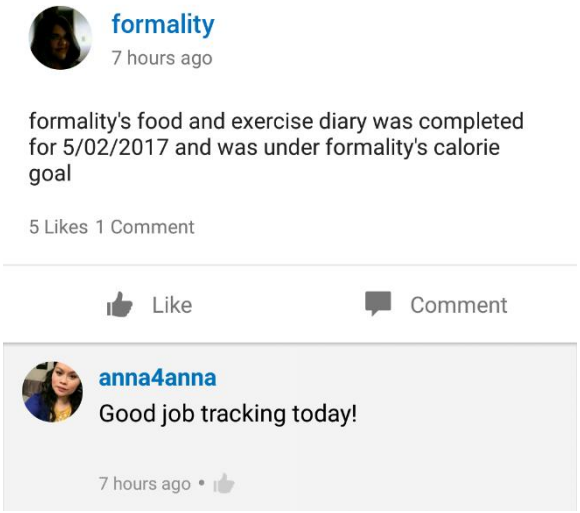


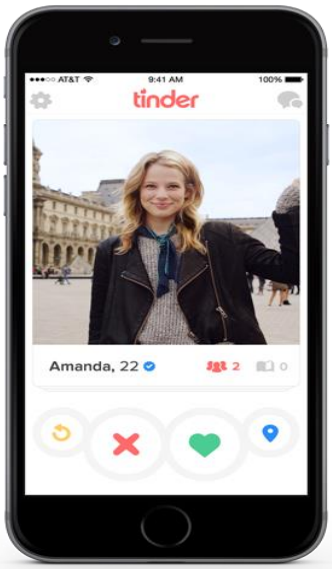
Image 4. Example of comments on app.

Image 4 shows an example of the type of comments that are left on the community boards of the app. *MyFitnessPal*, thus creates a safe sphere in which the users feel as they belong to a community that understand their struggle and are there to help each other achieve their goals. Nevertheless, these types of spaces are tricky as they are managed by the user and the actual intake, the portion, or the exercise performed cannot be traced by any other means. This type of app minimizes nutrition to a mere number, and the user could eat their calorie goal on snacks or fast food; if the user wants specific nutrition information of the food they eat, then they have to pay for a "premium membership", as only the basic settings are available on the free version of the app. The app relies entirely on numbers and thus creates an image based on what has been explained by several authors as the *quantified self*, in other words, self-knowledge through self-tracking (Lupton 2016). The quantified self emerges from self-tracking habits and this apps works mainly on that plane, as it gives a number and expects the user to comply to that number. Therefore, this app will bring forward a specific part of the self. By adding the social factor, the app appeals to the so called *collaborative self*, which is explained by Sherry Turkle as a fragile self that needs constant validation (Turkle 2011:177), by entering an app that promises a safe space, the user gets the instant and constant validation they need. Thus, this app works as a mirror that shows an image of the 'future-self' as it tells the user that if they follow what the app tells them, then they will reach their goal on a certain number of weeks; on the other side, it works as a safe space in which the user does not feel judged and can befriend people with the same goals and struggles they have. Therefore, this type of app uses both time and space to create an image that will appeal to the user by using hard data, as numbers, and emotions, by guarantying validation and support of peers.

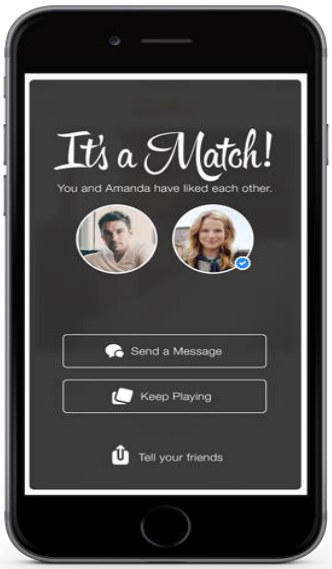
Now, on the category of "Social", I will be looking at the app *Tinder*. This app, is far more complex as it deals with social and personal perceptions not only through hard data but by a control of the images shown. *Tinder* is a social app with an age restriction of minimum 17 years of age, it has been downloaded more than 50 million times and has been rated with 3.9 stars by more than 2 million users on the *Android Play Store* as it can be seen on Image 5. The

Image 5. App info on *Playstore.*

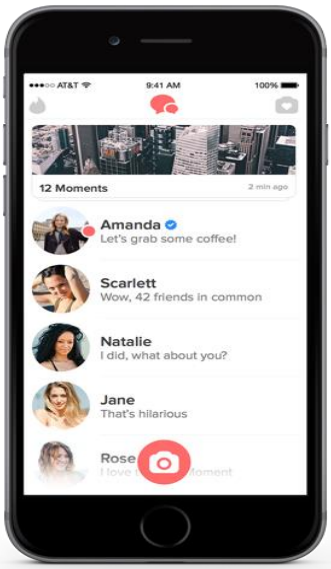
purpose of the app is to meet new people. To be able to use the app, a *Facebook* account is needed, as the information and photographs are linked from the profile. The user also has the option to link their *Instragam* as well as their *Spotify*[13] accounts to show a more complete profile. The way the app is used is by showing a main photograph, the name of the owner of the profile, and whatever additional information they have included, like hobbies, likes or dislikes, quotes, height, etc. The information as well as the images provided are shown in order to persuade other users to swipe right to your profile, meaning they like it. If they swipe left then it means they pass on the profile but the user does not receive any notification of this action. If two users swipe right on each other, then a match is created and the option to message is open. If there is no match, then the messaging is not available. This is done to ensure that you would only talk to the people you allow by liking them. The interface of the app is shown on Image 6:



By swiping right or touching the heart, the user likes a profile, by swiping left or touching the x, the user passes the profile.



The match message is shown once two user swipe right on each other.



The messaging section is available once a match has been achieved.

Image 6. *Tinder's* interface.

[13] *Spotify* is a digital music service that can be used on smartphones by downloading the app.

The user therefore choses the way they present themselves to allure those that share something in common. *Tinder* offers the option to show the user's location and send it to those that have matched with its profile, therefore it combines different elements: it all starts within the virtual and mental space of the app, once the match has been made, the users enter a social space in which connections and relations are made. Within a virtual and social environment, a relation is created based on images, an edited profile and thought messages: "whenever one has time to write, edit, and delete, there is room for performance" (Turkle 2011: 181). The profile, thus, can be understood as a performance in which the user wants to control the impression the other will get by portraying images and messages that match with the conscious decision of showing their self in a specific manner. The action of portraying a certain image will be further explained on the next chapter. *Tinder* users might like or pass on a certain profile based on what they want to achieve from the app: make friends, have a frugal or serious relation, meet sexual partners or get instant validation and acceptance. The app is perfect for validation seekers, as it only shows positives notifications: when some other user liked or "super liked" you, when you have a match or when you receive a message from one of your matches. The collaborative and quantified self also act on this app as the more matches you get, the more messages you receive and overall the more "likable" is the user's profile. Profiles will translate differently to each user as, on Barthes words: "images do not say, they refer" (Barthes 1974:62), in other words, they denote different meanings and messages as they do not have a static meaning, they only allure to a certain type of message. These images do not always translate to the real person as the user has had time to edit what they want to show. If the user allows so, the realities of the virtual and the physical space can collide, users can meet each other face to face, and explore the virtual relation in an everyday reality basis; taking the user out of the static image within a controllable environment into the uncontrollable and much harder to edit physical space.

Going back to the categorizations, they also work as specialized spaces that act within the main space of the smartphone, creating a *worldness* out of an object. Each specialized space will create a sphere in which a work is performed, and that will use in a different way the spaces that collide within the smartphone space, creating an inside and an outside within the smartphone. The worldness is created away from the physical space, it is a result of the creation and mixture of specialized spaces, the abundance of social relation and interactions, an embedded memory and history. The worldness of the smartphone can be explained in Heideggerian terms:

> *What we 'first' hear is never noises or complexes of sounds, but the creaking waggon, the motor-cycle. We hear the column on the march, the north wind, the woodpecker tapping, the fire crackling… It requires a very artificial and complicated frame of mind to 'hear' a 'pure noise'. The fact that motor-cycles and waggons are what we proximally hear is the phenomenal evidence that in every case Dasein, as Being-in-the-world, already dwells alongside what is ready-to-hand within-the-world; it certainly does not dwell proximally alongside 'sensations'; nor would it first have to give shape to the swirl of sensations to provide a springboard from which the subject leaps off and finally arrives at a 'world'. Dasein, as essentially understanding, is proximally alongside what is understood. (Heidegger 1962: 207)*

A 'world', according to Heidegger, deals with space and time, as well as with ready-to-hand objects, that trough involvement, create an overall understanding of the world. As Heidegger understood space away from the physical Cartesian view, he inevitably explained the body in those terms:

> *When we step on a scale, we do not weigh our 'lived-body' but merely the weight of our 'body.' Or further, the limit of the 'lived-body' is not the limit of the 'body.' The limit of the body is the skin. The limit of the 'lived-body' is more difficult to determine. (Heidegger on Malpas 2012: 116)*

The lived-body is a very interesting concept that is dealt with in the smartphone phenomena. The body is constrained to the physical space and to sense-based-experience, while the lived-body jumps between specialized spaces and worlds, being attached only to experience. In other words, we make use of the device with our body on the physical, social space, but what is experience along with the information and the profile created on the worldness of the smartphone is part of the lived-body. This can be seen on different apps. There are a series of apps that once downloaded, they require the user to enter either an email, or log in to the *Facebook* profile. This creates a link between the apps: the information of the account used and the location where that account downloads them, inscriptions are made: online registrations, sensible data, general information, all of this is found within the apps and within the smartphone (Ferraris 2008: 20-21). These inscriptions create a reconstruction of the social life of the user, mixing reality of the outside space with the reality of the smartphone space. The outside and

the inside are one. Both the body and the lived-body become inscribed. The smartphone, therefore, takes reality and transforms it:

> *Like all languages, the language of things is as useful for lying as it is for telling the truth. Things lie, and when, having become commodities, they lie in order to conceal their origin, namely social labour, they tend to set themselves up as absolutes. Products and the circuits they establish (in space) are fetishized and so become more 'real' than reality itself- that is, than productive activity itself, which they thus take over. (Lefebvre 1991:80-81)*

Things possess their own language as they speak to us in different manners (Adams, Thompson 2015: 41) the smartphone has its own language, a language based on gestures, icons and spoken words. The user can ask their smartphone to do something by touching or speaking, as the smartphone does the same to the user by emitting vibrations, noises, light or even a sentence. If the device's battery is about to run out, the object creates a series of messages to tell the user it is time to charge it, if we get a notification a noise or a vibration is produced to catch the user's attention and emit a message. The user understands this language without any problem as it is of an invitational quality (ibid.). Smartphones have become commodities as they are useful and valuable and in themselves carry others. This product "become more 'real' than reality itself" as it allows the user to portrait their self and their life in a way that can be manipulated and allow "Humans as social beings […] to produce their own life, their own consciousness, their own world" (Lefebvre 1991: 68). The world created is now visible to others with the use of the smartphone and with certain social and communication apps, we can now show and share our lives to other users. We can overshare, edit and manipulate what will be shown on the screen through apps that are smartphone-exclusive; the space, as we have said is controllable. The smartphone-exclusive apps are what differentiate the use of the smartphone with that of a laptop or a tablet, as we can argue that on both we can access the internet, share content and communicate with others (Ferraris 2008: 19). Most of the actions that can be achieved with a laptop or a tablet can be achieved with a smartphone, true, but the portability issue, the way we transport it, use it and the options available on each device due to their overall design varies greatly. The smartphone fits perfectly in one hand, it can be used with only our thumb, it fits in our pocket and is easy to carry, it has only one or a few buttons and is manageable through the touchscreen; with laptops and tablets, we use both hands and carry them differently as they

are bigger and heavier. Laptops in general have an overall distinctive design as they are made to be use by programs instead of apps and with the help of a keyboard and a touchpad, therefore both hands are needed to make the most out of the object. A tablet is hybrid in between a laptop and a smartphone as it is made of a touchscreen without a keyboard and only one or few buttons as those of the smartphone, nevertheless, the overall design and language of the tablet is that of a "laptop-on-the-go" without carrying the actual laptop. The smartphone, as it had been stated above, also has exclusive apps that are mostly based on visual and audiovisual content. There's a recent boom on the "history" option. An option that on the last year has appeared across social media platforms, this possibility is only available on the smartphone's app version of the social media platform. It allows the user to upload a content, call it a video or an image that will only be available for 24 hours. The option became a possibility back in 2011 with the release of *Snapchat,* an app that allows the users to upload, manipulate and share content that will be erased on a desired amount of time. This new way of communication changed the way of sharing. "Snapchat's early growth was based on teens finding a space where they could communicate out of sight of older relatives, and with a disposability that mitigated to a large extent the potential threat of future embarrassment." (Kemp 2017) Smartphone users were now able to share short videos or images telling a story without worrying about leaving a "footprint" or an inscription as the message will be erased after a certain amount of time. Anyone who owns a smartphone is able upload and share opinions, ideas, stories, images, users can create their own persona, as the device acts as a hot medium as "It engages you. You have to be *with it*" (Mcluhan 1964: 340). In the worldness of the device, the content that we get and which we share is made by friends, who become the main characters of their content, they create their own narratives; of acquaintances that become our audience and of users we have never physically met, nevertheless, they exist within this space, they relate, judge and observe. The reality within the space of the apps becomes more and more real, as there are relations that can only be sustained through it and that continue thanks to it.

Spaces in the object collide in a way in which a new space with a unique worldness emerges, this all comes from the fact that whilst the user is in contact with the smartphone, they are surrounded with a certain absence, close to a disembodied state (Turkle 2006) in which the whole attention or focus is directed to the object, instead of the physical surroundings. As it has been explained on this chapter, the user does enter a new space in

which new connections, relations and overall social and individual activity is performed. The space of the smartphone clashes with the spaces of the everyday reality and thus becomes stronger as it enhances is and allows the user to interact with it wherever and whenever. Now that the space has been explained, the nature of the interactions will be explained in terms of self-perception and self-presentation through the controlled environment.

CHAPTER III

MOLDING INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIAL IDENTITY THROUGH THE OBJECT AND SPACE

What we know as reality, as what is real, is the product of many variables, who we are, where we live, whether the organs of perception are damaged or healthy, our relation to surrounding organisms as well as objects and the meaning we give them. Reality is a complex construction that varies on spatial, temporal and object relations. Therefore, what we conceive as real, will inevitably be linked to social matters. The smartphone, will alter the perception of ourselves and others as it works as a mirror that can be manipulated or distorted; creating a persona that will be real on the space of the smartphone as an alter reflection of the reality outside said space.

III.I The Mirroring Process

When we hold a mirror in front of us, we are able to reflect what we desire, our entire being, our face, specific parts of our self, we can see what's behind us and with adjustments what's above or below us. A mirror can reflect fragments or wholes, depending on what is it that we want to see, but we do not get reality, we get an *imago,* that which Jacques Lacan explains as "the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image" (Lacan 1966: 2) in other words, the imago is that which comes to a subject as a projection, could be idealized or not. Nevertheless, what we get is never reality as it, we are only able to see ourselves as a reflection, therefore, the entire perception of ourselves comes to us through the gestalt (Lacan 1966: 3). Because of the gestalt, reality as a projection through the use of a mirror or *imagos* can lead us to believe that what we see on the reflection is ourselves as an interface that only shows the exterior; the interior, what we truly are, our experiences, ideologies, our whole context, is not reflected on the image, only bits and pieces of that we wish to show.

When a mirror is mention, it is not only in the sense of the physical mirror, that of a glass surface that reflects images, no, a mirror can be anything that reflects back, like still water in a pond, a screen, a picture, or even a person. Anything that creates an imago will act as a mirror. This mirror-image created by anything that emits a reflection will act as a double "in which physical realities, however heterogeneous, are manifested" (ibid.). The imago through this doubleness will stablish "the relation between the organism and its reality - or, as they say,

between the *Innenwelt* and the *Umwelt"* (Lacan 1966: 4). When the imago is completed and has helped the latter relation the ego comes into being (ibid.) in other words, the imago of ourselves comes to us in different pieces and once the image is realized as a whole then the projection bounces back the ego, which has been constructed on the image outside ourselves. The ego is built on our self-perception combined with the exterior image and our whole social context. This is all built within the reality of the organism, that which is experienced and perceived. The reality of the organism is understood here as the reality presented by Berger and Luckman, that which he calls reality *par excellence*, the reality of our everyday life:

> *The reality of everyday life is organized around the 'here' of my body and the 'now' of my present. This 'here and now' is the focus of my attention to the reality of everyday life. What is 'here and now' presented to me in everyday life is the realissimum of my consciousness. (Berger, Luckman 1966: 36)*

The reality of which Berger and Luckman talk about is not alone and is enriched by different realities that come to mix with everyday life.

> *The transition between realities is marked by the rising and falling of the curtain. As the curtain rises, the spectator is 'transported to another world', with its own meaning and an order that may or may not have much to do with the order of everyday life. As the curtain falls, the spectator 'returns to reality', that is, to the paramount reality of everyday life by comparison with which the reality presented on the stage now appears tenuous and ephemeral, however vivid the presentation may have been a few moments previously. (Berger, Luckman 1966: 39)*

Therefore, reality as we live it is made of different spheres, those "artificial realities" that can be turn on and off, as well as the everyday reality, that which we live day by day. Reality, as it has been stated before, can be reflected by a mirror and will go through the same distortion as it will be shown as an imago.

The mirror then, creates a projection of the self and of reality, this projection, as distorted as it may be, cannot be simply manipulated, we cannot reach for the mirror-image and change what we do not like. This has changed with the era of the smartphone. In previous chapters, it has been stated that the smartphone acts as a mirror, this statement can be approach in two different ways: when the smartphone is on its allographic state and when it has gone

through the autographic state. The former is the simplest form of understanding it, as the smartphone will act as a mirror in the sense that it will only bounce back an imago on two different ways: when the screen is turned off and we see our reflection or when it is turned on and we are using the camera or a mirror app, in which we will be seeing ourselves on the screen. This type of imago is the simplest one, as it refers to the actual image on the surface. The second way of approaching the statement is a bit more complex as it encompasses that the object has reached an autographic state, which as we now know, means that inscriptions have been made and the projections are bouncing back feedback that may alter the ego. This feedback that bounces back from the imago is in Lacan's terms the "ideal-I". In order to fully understand the process of mirroring we first have to understand the previously-mentioned term.

III.II "I" and "Me": Creating the "Ideal-I"

Reflections, projections and imagos are tricky, they can be captivating or deceiving, they can help a person reflect on the self or create a distortion of the personality on some cases. When the relation between the imago and the reflected organism is mentioned, no alterations like image dissociation or severe narcissism is considered. Nevertheless, this types of image related disorders can help us understand some of the processes that happen on an individual while dealing with a reflection.

The Greek myth of Narcissus narrate the story of a young man that was known for his beauty, he rejected everyone that tried to lure him, in consequence of his behavior the Goddess Nemesis guided Narcissus to a pond. In the pond, he saw his own reflection and felt in love with it without realizing it was only an image. The young man created such a fixation to the image in the pond that in some versions of the myth he ended up committing suicide by drowning and in others he stared at his own reflection until he passed away. Despite the different versions of the myth, the story of Narcissus tells the dangers of vanity and severe self-admiration. As McLuhan states: "the youth Narcissus mistook his own reflection in the water for another person. This extension of himself by mirror numbed his perceptions until he became the servomechanism of his own extended or repeated image" (McLuhan 1964: 45). The mirror-image, the double created in the pond is what numbed Narcissus, but it is not solely the image but the feedback that we get from it what alters perception. When an individual looks at its own imago on their smartphones, there's a feedback that bounces back, just as it did to Narcissus:

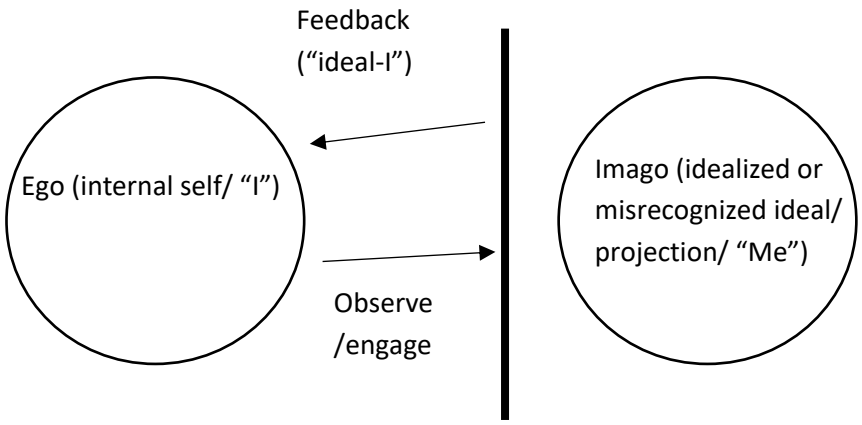


Figure 6. The mirroring process.

When the user stares at its own imago, different processes occur. As shown on Figure 6, first the “I” is exposed to a projection, the “I” and the ego will be molded by what is refracted on the mirror. The mirror-image or imago will be an idealized or misrecognized projection, that which Mead explains as the “Me”. The “Me” is created within society as it takes from others, then it is reflected on by the “I”, in Meads words: “The ‘I’ is the response of the organism to the attitudes of the others, the ‘Me’ is the organized set of attitudes of others which one himself assumes. The attitudes of the other constitute the organized ‘Me’, and then one reacts toward that as an ‘I’” (Mead 1967: 175). Therefore, the balance between the internal self or the “I” and the social self as a projection, or the “Me”, is what constitutes the self. The ideal-I will appear in between the two as part of the specular image. The feedback that bounces back from the imago presents an ideal image of ourselves which does not correspond to reality, but to which we strive to, hence, creating both a connection and a split in the self between the “I” and the ideal-I (Lacan 1966: 2-5, 339-340).

By the time Jacques Lacan and George Herbert Mead published their works on the self the smartphone did not exist, nevertheless, their ideas can be taken and applied to this device as it works with imagos and both the relation with ourselves and others. The smartphone as the mirror and as the creator of imagos work, as it has been said, by reflecting actual images and by the feedback of inscriptions. The smartphone as it has been mentioned in the previous

chapters is the creator of a new space in which a reconstruction and an evolution of the social life in everyday reality is reflected and carried on, as the worldness of the smartphone is experience by, in Heideggerian terms, both body and lived-body, the device will create imagos of both. The former will work with images, videos and gifs and the latter with written inscriptions. The ideal-I will work on both levels; therefore, the feedback of the imago will be both for the exterior and the interior of the self. Let us start with the exterior.

Going back to the myth of Narcissus and the way McLuhan understands it and links it with technology as an extension of the self we will be able to grasp what happens with the image-based apps. The image reflected by a common everyday mirror cannot be manipulated outside technology, the smartphone as both mirror and technology carrier gives the user numerous options by which an image can be manipulated, enhanced, and spread using apps with filters[14], stickers, adjusting settings and overall to control and manipulate the whole image. This is not exclusive to photos, as it can also be done to videos, clips and gifs. The manipulation of the image helps the user achieve the status of the ideal-I through the projected image. Leaving aside for a moment landscape pictures and videos, let's focus on the imago that has been shared countless of times by numerous users: the selfie. A selfie is understood as a photograph one takes of oneself at arm's length, it is defined by the *Oxford Dictionary* as a "photograph that one has taken of oneself, typically one taken with a smartphone or webcam and shared via social media". [15] To understand this phenomenon perpetuated by the smartphone, we will be looking at a particular app that is smartphone-exclusive: *Instagram.* This app and social network is based on users sharing pictures that may have a caption and are accompanied by the use of hashtags (#). [16]These hashtags help group the images the users are posting and by clicking on them we can see how many times that hashtag have been used and the pictures that are grouped under it. I have recently checked the number of times the tag [17]*#selfie* has been shared and it

[14] Filters are used in photography as add-ons to the lenses in order to create a certain effect on the photograph, these add-ons have been translated into software, now a filter in the context of the smartphone is "a function used to alter the overall appearance of an image in a specific manner". Definition taken from the online version of *Oxford Dictionary*: https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/filter

[15] Definition taken from the online version of *Oxford Dictionary*: https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/selfie

[16] A hashtag is "a word or phrase preceded by a hash sign (#), used on social media websites and applications, especially Twitter, to identify messages on a specific topic." Definition taken from the online version of *Oxford Dictionary:* https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/hashtag

[17] A tag is "a word, phrase, or name used to identify digital content such as blog and social media posts as belonging to a particular category or concerning a particular person or topic." Definition taken from the online version of *Oxford Dictionary:* https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/tag

goes to an impressive 296, 416, 763 posts [18]. If we consider the existing variations of this hashtag like *#selfies* with 17, 956,048 posts, *#self* with 6, 910, 192 posts, *#selfietime* with 9,215,721 posts or *#selfiesunday* with 9, 215, 757 posts[19] we can see an impressive amount of more than 300 million posts related to selfies. The selfie is taken by the front camera of the smartphone and therefore the image will come from the perspective we give to the device, as the picture can be seen on the screen in front of us, the user can choose whether to take the picture or change the perspective, and afterwards manipulate it in order to share it or just save it for himself or herself. Now, I have shared the numbers of only one app and which have the hashtag, there are several pictures without the hashtags, and many other that have been shared through different apps, but by the use of an image-based app that groups pictures by tags it is easier to grasp the number of users that have shared this type of images. Even though the selfie already existed before the invention of the smartphone, it has become the imago *par excellence* of the device, as the front camera was designed for the purpose of facilitating showing the users face in order to take pictures and make videocalls back in 2003 (Moschovi, et al 2014: 24-27). This interaction with the user changed the way pictures were taken and has become an essential part of smartphones. The front camera shows the perspective of the other watching us, instead of that of the back camera which is what the user is watching, hence it is the perfect creator of an imago, becoming a contemporary mirror. As the smartphone holds the components of a camera as well of that of an editor, the shooting of pictures and editing becomes instant. This on-the-go editing and shooting makes it easier to perform the act therefore the technology becomes overused:

> *It is this continuous embrace to our own technology in daily use that puts us in the Narcissus role of subliminal awareness and numbness in relation to these images of ourselves. By continuously embracing technologies, we relate ourselves to them as servomechanisms. That is why we must, to use them at all, serve these objects, these extensions of ourselves, as gods or minor religions. (McLuhan 1964: 50-51)*

McLuhan's idea of the Narcissus role does not only refer to the actual obsession of our physical appearance but to the way we see ourselves projected and how other will receive that image

[18] This number was checked on April 11, 2017, the actual number may vary as new posts come in every day. The number can be checked by going on *Instagram* and searching #selfie, or by going on the following link: https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/selfie/?hl=es

[19] The variations on the hashtag can all be checked on *Instagram* by simply searching #self, all variation as well as number of posts will be shown. The numbers shown above were last checked by April 11, 2017.

through technological devices. Selfies do not only reflect physical ideals achieved by using beauty filters but desired statuses and ideologies, the perspective, background, filters or lack of them as well as colors and objects surrounding a person in a selfie will show the way the user wants to project their self.

> *The selfie is often criticised (sic.) as merely a form of narcissism. In fact selfies may also be viewed as an important genre for better understanding issues of identity, aspiration and social expectations. Certainly in taking selfies individuals actively craft the impressions they hope to give, making such images a significant form of self-expression. The term narcissism, however, suggests an orientation towards the self, whereas selfies are mostly used in relation to specific audiences and to maintain social relationships. (Miller et al 2016: 158)*

Selfies can help understand the ideal-I created for both body and lived-body as on most of the apps in which a user can share a selfie they can add a caption that goes with it. This caption alongside the image create a complete inscription that shows both the physical and mental projection of the user. Creating and imago of both the exterior and the interior. Inscriptions that are related to the imago of the lived-body are far more complex as this are inscriptions that combine visual, audio and written components that may or may not include the user, such as sharing worldwide news, articles or any other multimedia content that relates to the user but is not created by the user. Captions that are written alongside the image create a whole narrative, as they enhance the idea of the image, here is an example taken from a public profile on *Instagram*:

Image 7. Example of *selfie* from *Instagram*.

[20] The image was taken from: https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/selfie/?hl=es

Selfies like the one shown on Image 7 are easily found on *Instagram*: the angle of the picture is taken at arm's length and slightly above the position of the head, this way the face looks thinner and the eyes bigger, making them the main point of focus of the picture (Chen 2016: 27). The image has been captioned with the words: "All you need is faith, trust and a lil pixie dust", the sentence does not show an author, even though it is a slightly modified quote from the *Disney* movie *Peter Pan*, the original quote is "All you need is a little faith, trust, and pixie dust.". By ignoring where the quote was taken from, the user may seem as the original writer for those who do not know the movie or do not remember the quote. The caption, thus, gives a sense of positivity and reassuring one can reach their goals by believing in one's self, if the user that reads the caption knows where the quote comes from, then the sense changes, as it may seem as someone who likes *Disney*, or that keeps in touch with their inner-child. The caption helps enhances positivity, whilst the image on its own shows a self-center picture that has no connection to the movie and with a narcissistic glance, as the focal point is the face of the user. The imago and inscription will mean one thing to the user and another to the viewer, thus, once the social side is considered, the mirroring process will change from that shown on Figure 6.

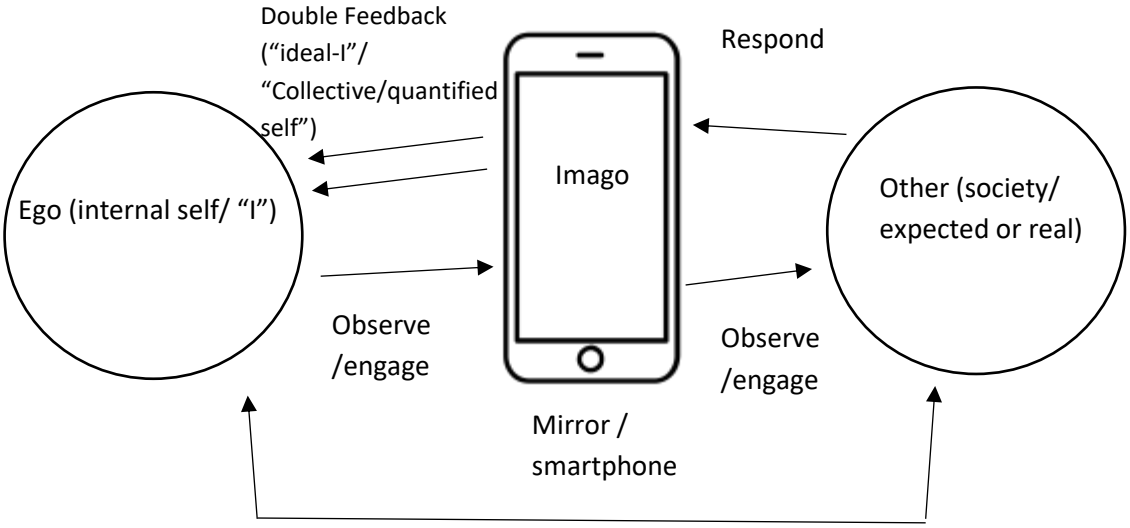


Figure 7. The mirroring process with the social component.

Figure 7 shows the mirroring process including the social component. The Ego or the "I" will receive a double feedback, that of the "ideal-I" and that from the response of the other,

which is divided into two: the real response and the expected response. The former will be part of the previously explained "collective self" and "quantified self" as it will be in the form of the number of "likes" and comments left on the image; the latter will be the expected response created on the mind of the user, how he/she expects the other will react to their image. By posting online we can present ourselves the way we want to, as Goffman has elucidated on his theory of identity and social performance, self-presentation is a process of impression management. According to Goffman social interactions can be controlled and molded in order to persuade the perception the other gets, with the arrival of the smartphone, interactions have changed as now we can do it through a control environment. What we decide to share and what we keep for ourselves in our smartphones help controlled the persona created online.

> *Sometimes the individual will be calculating in his activity but be relatively unaware that this is the case. Sometimes he will intentionally and consciously express himself in a particular way, but chiefly because the tradition of his group or social status require this kind of expression and not because of any particular response (other than vague acceptance or approval) that is likely to be evoked from those impressed by the expression. (Goffman 1956: 3)*

Acceptance is key, when a regular person that has been using a smartphone throughout their life and has shared on different social networks there's an identity created through the use of certain images, language, the type of things they share and how often they are present on the virtual environment, these will all gain them acceptance within certain groups and as well as it will forge the personal identity and help manage social relationships (Guazzini, Cecchini et al. 2016: 16-27). Self-presentation as well as a controlled image of the virtual imago is highly manipulative as there are different privacy setting throughout different apps that let us manage what we show and who we show it to. Therefore, inscriptions and posts that show personal information can be hidden or showed only to a certain group of people, while other inscriptions can be done on a public way. There are also settings that allow the user block or accept what others post of them, this control help us eliminate what we do not wish to see on our social media profiles as it does not fit in the projection of the ideal-I. But these types of locks and passwords do not always work, as inscriptions can get leaked, stole, shared or sold by third parties.

III.III Beyond the Sphere and into our Everyday Life: The Downfall of Privacy

The space of the smartphone can be controlled as we are able to erase what we do not wish to share and store information that can only be seen by us using locks and passwords, it is a safe space, a private space. Nevertheless, as smartphones are becoming more and more reachable due to the great availability of range prices and options to acquire one, the sense of privacy outside our own smartphone is lost. Unauthorized intrusion into one's data or life is a way in which a person can lose their privacy. Nowadays, anyone with this device at hand can record or take pictures of a third party without their consent, and without the affected even noticing. Let's take one simple example, when we are at a group gathering and someone is taking pictures and posting them online or is engaged on a live video and the camera turns our way, when we watch that post we might feel as the image that has been shared is somehow far from what we really look like, is not our "best self" or it is not projected the way we might have projected it and develop feelings of embarrassment or anger. This might happen also the other way around, a picture is taken and shared and we feel we look better than how we do in a day to day basis. This detachment from the imago created on the smartphone is explained by McLuhan as self-amputation:

> *This is the sense of the Narcissus myth. The young man's image is a self-amputation or extension induced by irritating pressures. As counter-irritant, the image produces a generalized numbness or shock that declines recognition. Self-amputation forbids self-recognition. (McLuhan 1964: 47)*

When self-recognition is not achieved the locks and passwords can help us hide the image from our profile so it will not be further shared amongst our social groups. This negated imago can create feelings of discomfort and aggression (Lacan 1966: 339) as the reflected "me" will entirely come from the other and the controlled projection has been lost. As Berger and Luckman have elucidated on their work *The Social Construction of Reality*, individuals are not as available to their selves as other are to them, in other words, to grasp our self, the use of a mirror and reflection is essential, the representation the individual will get about its own self will always come as a response to the mirror projection from the other:

> *My subjectivity is accessible to me in a way his can never be, no matter how 'close' our relationship. My past is available to me in memory in a fullness with which I can never reconstruct his, however much he may tell me about it. But this 'better knowledge' of*

> *myself requires reflection. It is not immediately appresented to me. The other, however, is so appresented in the face-to-face situation. 'What he is', therefore, is ongoingly available to me. This availability is continuous and prereflective. On the other hand, 'What I am' is not so available. To make it available requires that I stop, arrest the continuous spontaneity of my experience, and deliberately turn my attention back upon myself. What is more, such reflection about myself is typically occasioned by the attitude towards me that the other exhibits. It is typically a 'mirror' response to attitudes of the other. (Berger, Luckman 1966: 44)*

Thus, when an imago that comes from the other clashes with the imago we have built for ourselves, self-recognition and acceptance is not achieved. This is also caused by the built-in typifications we have created of ourselves and others (Berger, Luckman 1966: 44-46). Smartphones help us carry those typifications with the help of projections of the ideal-I:

> *The typifications of social interaction become progressively anonymous the further away they are from the face-to -face situation. Every typification, of course, entails incipient anonymity. If I typify my friend Henry as a member of category X (say, as an Englishman), I ipso facto interpret at least certain aspects of his conduct as resulting from this typification (Berger, Luckman 1966 :46)*

Typifications become easier with the help of social interactions within the space of the smartphone and even more accessible on the spheres of social media. The smartphone as a mirror and as a projection of both the body and the lived-body works as a tool to typify ourselves as the self-face-to-face interaction becomes easier. But when privacy is broken, by using the device to photograph, record and/or share through social media a third party that is unaware of the action and has not given consent, typifications shift and judgment appear.

Smartphones used to record a third party without their approval can be used as both an invasion of privacy and as a method of impeachment; this usage defies and shifts typifications and the ideal-I henceforth creating chaos on the user's life. In order to understand this, there will be two different examples taken from the public domain in which a smartphone is explicitly used in order to create images that brought a whirl winding chaos to different individuals. The first example comes from Mexico where there has been a trend to record people and denounce them on social media for illegal or unethical behavior; the people shown on the videos have been baptized with the term "Lord" in the case of men, and "Lady" in the case of women. There

are a lot of examples of these types of videos, but there was one that caused a lot of confusion and anger through social media; the chosen example was spread through mass communication on March 2017 as the case of "*Lord Prepa 10"*[21] (public high schools in the state of Jalisco, Mexico are numbered and thus "prepa" is a slang term that translates to high school and 10 is the specific school). A teacher called Ramón Bernal Urrea was recorded with a smartphone by one of his students while giving a lecture. The video shows the teacher using profane language while giving a misogynistic speech. The video went viral and thus people started raging against the teacher and asking the school to dismiss him. Later, a longer version of the video alongside a letter written by the teacher was posted online explaining that he was in fact giving a lecture against acts of male chauvinism and that the "*Lord Prepa 10*" video had been taken out of context as well as edited by the person who posted it online[22]. Regardless of the contextualization the image of the teacher had already been damaged and the school proceeded against him for the use of profane language and chauvinistic ideas in front of minors. Needless to say, the image of the teacher was shattered and his career over. There is another case that is far more severe, that of the American teenager Audrie Pott. Back in 2012 in San Francisco, California the 15-year-old girl committed suicide due to the social sharing of a picture she was not aware even existed; she was drugged at a party and laid unconscious while some of her school mates sexually assaulted her and captured pictures on their smartphones. These pictures were shared online and thus created a visual mark of the event. Eight days after the sharing of the pictures Audrie Pott passed away[23]. Audrie Pott's parents shared the story of her daughter on the *Netflix* documentary *Audrie & Daisy* (released in 2016) where they explained they learned what had happened to her daughter after reconstructing the events using her smartphone and her social media. The documentary is used to create conscience about social media shaming, raping and bullying, topics that are present in society and that have affected numerous lives. It starts by zooming in into the case of Audrie Pott then zooming to the case of Daisy Coleman, ending by zooming out into numerous girls talking about their cases on camera. Audrie's death was caused by the sharing of an image she didn't even knew existed, images are

[21] The video can be watched in Spanish on the following link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UHZd9GoWvbY

[22] The complete note on the case can be read online on the Mexican newspaper *El Informador* on the following link: http://www.informador.com.mx/jalisco/2017/710711/6/la-udeg-valorara-situacion-laboral-de-docente-por-misoginia.htm

[23] News and documentary can be found on *Facebook* here: https://www.facebook.com/AudrieandDaisy/?fref=ts

powerful and can destroy lives. Not all the videos or pictures recorded without permission through a smartphone have to be this severe, nevertheless, an entire image, credibility, self-esteem and self-perception can be destroyed on all spheres of space and reality through this action. A smartphone is an excellent tool for communication and can help us achieve actions that we may not achieve on our own or through different resources, regardless, one must pay attention to this type of technology as it can also change and destroy lives.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Smartphones are very useful and powerful devices that have help different generations achieve certain actions faster; that allow the user access a great deal of information in a matter of seconds and that have overall help communication extend, as now geographical boundaries can be blurred by a video call, and have a face-to-face conversation with someone half way around the world by just touching the palm-fitting device. The smartphone, as it has been explained throughout the three chapters of this thesis, is a very complex object that shares a very strong relation with the user once it has achieved a status of autographic object, in other words, once the user has pour its information on it, linked accounts and created inscriptions, moreover, the relation becomes even stronger once an ontological symmetry is attained due to the reflection of the user's reality in the virtual environment. The reflection and the symmetry is absorbed by the device and ends up in the middle of different spaces: the mental, physical, social and virtual spaces. As it is explained through the second chapter of the present thesis, a new space is opened up by the smartphone, a space that defies boundaries and that interact differently with every app that is operated by the user. The different categories of apps, and the inscriptions made within them create a world out of the smartphone in which different relations between the user and others, the user and its self, as well as the user with the object, are made. The socialness within this space and this worldness differs from that of everyday reality, as explained on the third chapter, everyday reality impressions are only controllable to a certain extent, but on the reality derived from the smartphone space, impressions are based on edited, controlled and thought of messages and images that are created and sent through a safe space. This safe space can be intruded on a create chaos on the life of the user as dystopic imagos that clash with the created ideal-I imago can be shared without consent.

The smartphone works with an immersive environment that pulls the user in and creates a symmetry with the environment outside the device, altering the user's own perception of the self and social presentation. On the introductory part of the present thesis a question was posed regarding this topic:

> *When a smartphone is used its immersive technology captures the attention of the owner, making him/her unaware of their surroundings: What phenomena is taking*

place on the object that blurs the physical surroundings and pulls the owner into a different space that alters the perception of reality, the self and society?

Now that the three chapters of the thesis have been read and that the three main components to answer this question have been explained, it is easier to understand the phenomena. A triadic view is postured to understand all the factors involved in the phenomena: the idea of the smartphone as an object, as a space and as a mirror. The triadic relation looks as follows:

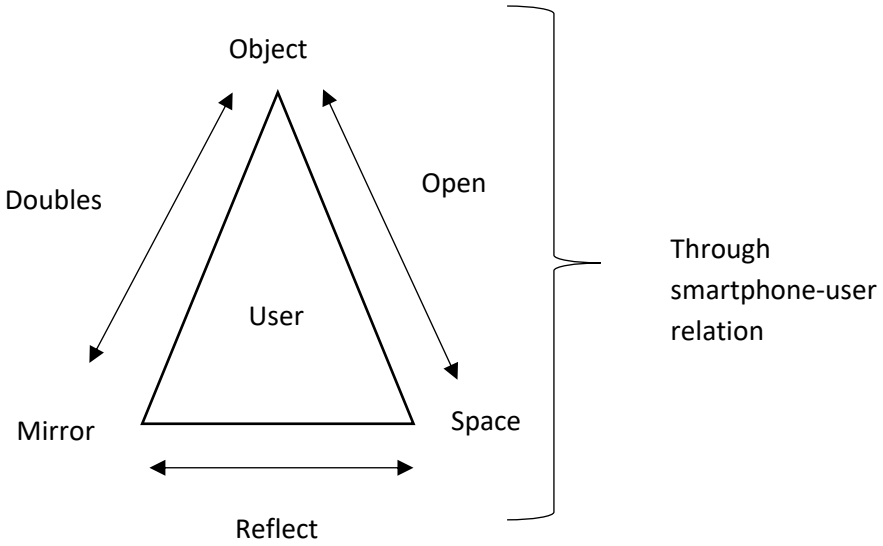


Figure 8 The triadic view.

Figure 8 is a graphic representation of the triadic view in which the relation between the concepts is explained: the object opens a new space, a space that is created by the reflections on the mirror that doubles as an object; all of it achieved through the smartphone-user relation. Therefore, when an individual takes out a smartphone and starts using it, their whole focus goes to the screen, as the object invites the user into an immersive space that will show a symmetrical relation with the everyday reality of the user. The user will experience different parts and representations of the self while in the smartphone space, as the imagos that are created on the mirror are distorted and controllable, creating a safe sphere in which relations are edited and that help receive instant gratification and response, as well as acceptance by targeted social groups. As it has been explained throughout the thesis, more and more users become addicted to their smartphones, not because of a narcissistic deviance, but because the device invites to self-reflection by constantly creating a self-to-self interaction as well as by helping manage different parts of the self. As the smartphones are a new technology that has kept on evolving, and will most definitely keep on doing so, the study of the smartphone-user relation is far from being completely understood.

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Images that were taken from a specific website and have an author show the reference on their specific footnote. All other images were taken by screenshots on my smartphone and thus do not have any other reference than being taken from an app or the *Android Playstore.*

NUTITELEFONI-KASUTAJA-IDENTITEEDI KOLMETISE VAATE POOLE: OBJEKT, RUUM JA PEEGELDUV 'MINA'

Kokkuvõte

Töö keskendub nutitelefoni kasutajaga seotud protsessile ja nähtustele; kui indiviid on nutitelefoniga kontaktis, muutub ta puuduvaks, kehatuks. Telefoni endassehaarav olemus viib kasutaja vaimu teise ruumi, igapäevaselt kasutatavate ruumide vahele. Ometi on see ruum teistsugune, suhted luuakse, identiteet lõhutakse ja samas esitab nutitelefon sümmeetriat argimaailmaga. Mõistmaks nutitelefoni-kasutaja suhet rakendab töö triaadest vaadet, selgitab nutitelefoni kui objekti, kui interaktsioone loovat ja muutvat uut ruumi ning kui peeglit, mis aitab kasutajal reflekteerida oma identiteeti seeläbi, et loob nii kasutajale enda kui teiste poolt nähtavat väänatud pilti. Uurimuse üldine küsimus on niisiis, kui nutitelefoni kasutatakse, tõmbab selle haarav tehnoloogia tähelepanu ning teeb kasutaja ümbrusest mitteteadlikuks; mis toimub objektiga, mis hägustab füüsilise ümbruse ja tõmbab kasutaja teise ruumi, mis asendab reaalsuse, enese ja ühiskonna taju? Küsimus saab vastatud, esmalt, avades kolme keskset mõistet kolmes peatükis: objekt, ruum ja peegel. Lõpuks moodustub neist ühtne tervik, mis selgitab uuritud nähtuse. Kui objektile hakatakse andma isiklikke sisendeid, muutub see lihtsast asjast millekski, mida Riggins nimetab *autograafiline objekt*, objekt, millel on kasutaja kujundatav tähenduse tasand. Kui nutitelefon jõuab sellesse seisu, ilmneb sotsiaalsus ruumi, mis on *tajutud*, *teatud* ja *elatud*; nende kolme kaudu ilmneb Lefebvre'i järgi uus ruum. See ruum võib olla tajutud, teatud ja elatud sümmeetrilise kujutluse kaudu, mille loob peegeldus *imagost* ehk kujutlus, mis võib olla aparaadi nuti-tehnoloogia poolt väänatud. See muudab nutitelefoni-kasutaja suhte omakorda tugevamaks.

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